



SMITTEN AND SLAIN

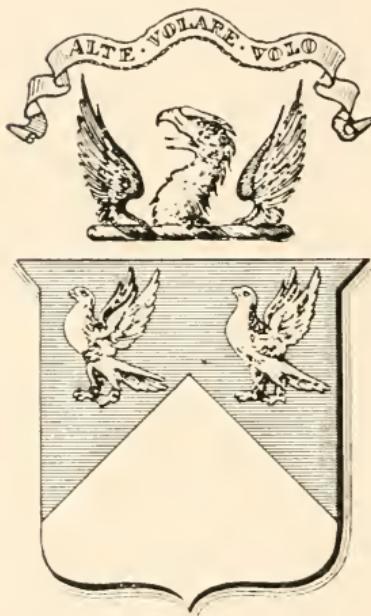
19th Century Romance
of Life in China

BY

A.V.V.

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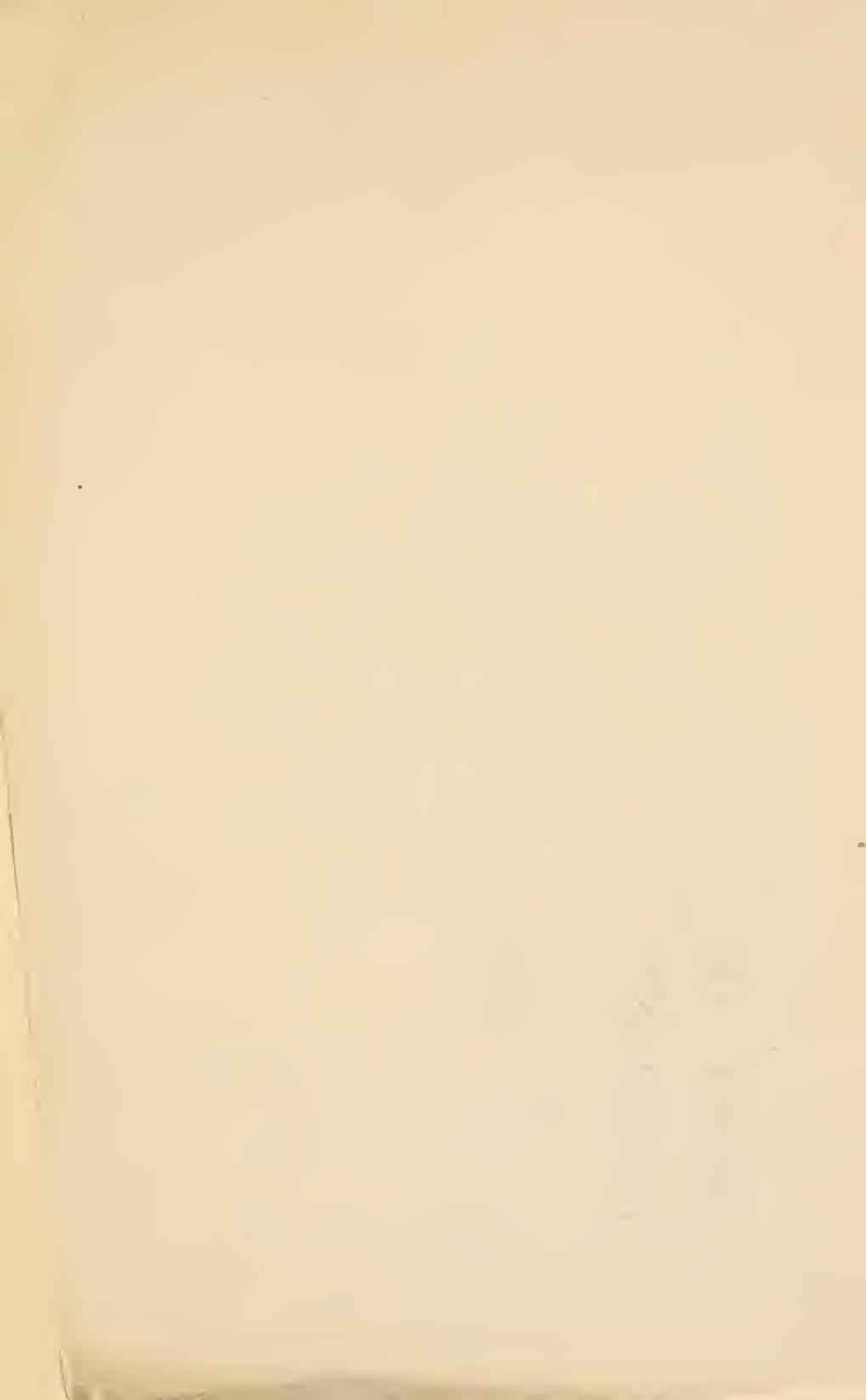
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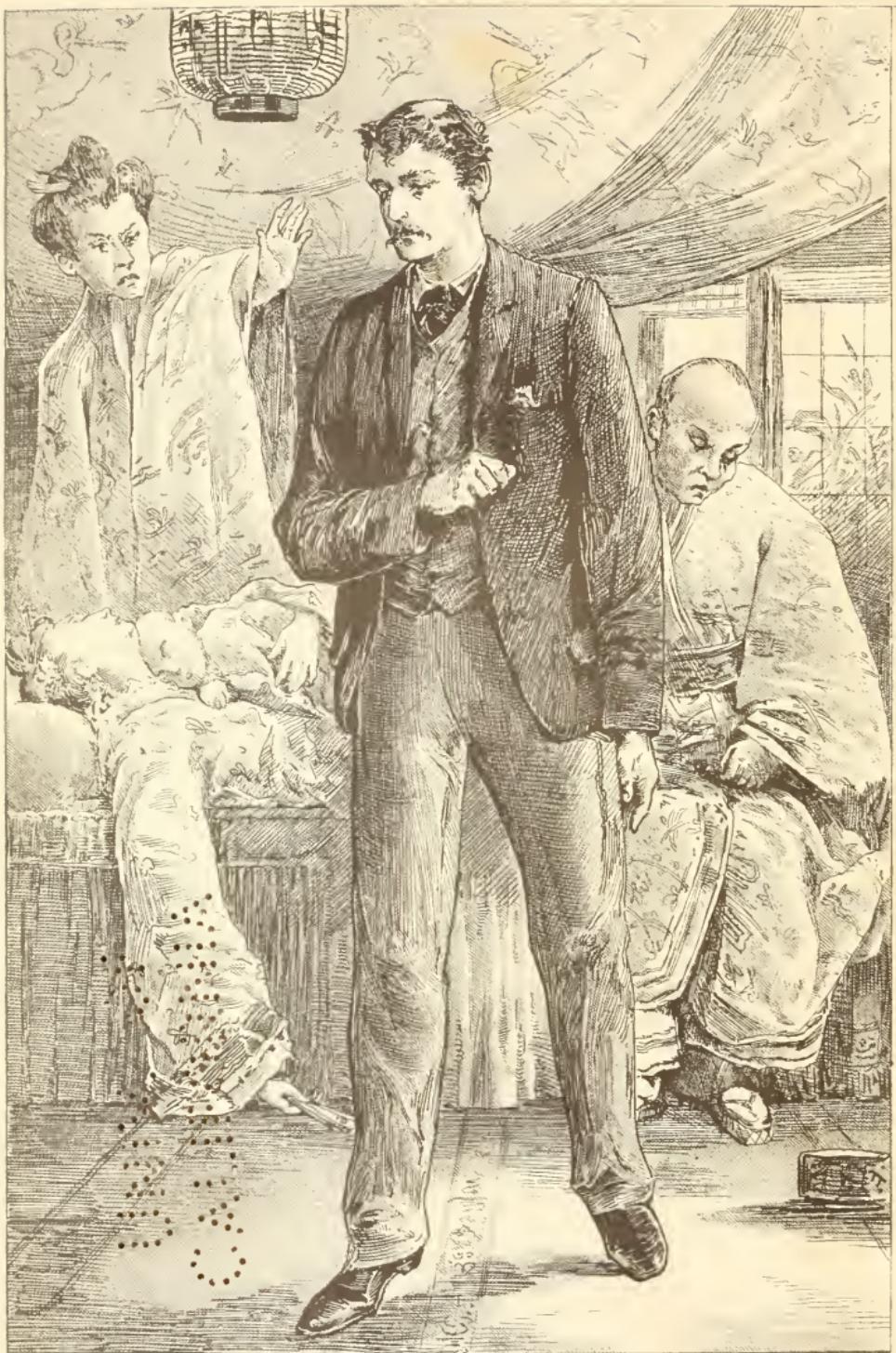
Miss Stephens
Cannon House
Breams Building
E.C.

To dear Maud

With the Author's love

Feb 25th /80 -





*"Go!" she cried, with rising anger. "I hate you English.
Go and leave us in our misery."*

SMITTEN AND SLAIN

*A 19th Century Romance of
Life in China*

BY

A. V. V.

Amy

Stephens



London
THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
35 Paternoster Row
EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK
1890

MERRY MORSE STEPHENS

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Contents.



I. FIRE ! FIRE ! FIRE !	9
II. MOTHER,	23
III. DAY-DREAMS,	48
IV. THE WEDDING-DAY,	66
V. HOME,	...	...	...	...	...	...	83
VI. BABY,	...	...	...	...	...	...	105
VII. TEMPTATION,	...	...	...	...	...	...	121
VIII. THE SISTERS,	...	...	...	...	...	...	140
IX. THE ROAD TO RUIN,	...	...	...	...	...	...	164
X. ENGLAND AND CHINA,	...	...	...	...	...	...	184
XI. A CRUEL KINDNESS,	...	...	...	...	...	...	205
XII. LINGSAM'S CRY,	...	...	...	...	...	...	226
XIII. ALONE ! ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	244

SMITTEN AND SLAIN.

CHAPTER I.

Fire! fire! fire!

“It must be agreed that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be assigned in favour of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in *roast pig*.”—CHARLES LAMB.

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

HOWEVER much men may differ from one another in complexion, in character, in desires, and in actions, there is a habit to which all are addicted, from the proud philosopher to the untutored savage. For every one *yawns* sometimes.

It was this universal though albeit commonly called vulgar act that little Lingsam, a young Chinese lady, was concluding behind her fan when we take our first peep at her. It is not a very distinct peep either, for the room is but dimly lighted, though the sun has not yet set.

No wonder Lingsam yawns, for the day has been

as quietly monotonous as every other day, and dreary with all the dull tediousness an Oriental lady's life could make it.

The monotony had indeed been broken by the marriage a week or so before of her only and elder sister; but now everything had settled down into the usual humdrum routine.

Such a life as little Lingsam led would have been wearisome beyond endurance to one who has been educated amid Western civilization. Yet it is not an unhappy one to her who has known no other, and in whose home there were those who loved her and whom she loved; for in all lands—in far-off China as in dear old England—it is love that makes the wheels of life run smoothly.

Li Francho, Lingsam's father, was a merchant of high repute in Sin-tau, one of the innumerable cities of vast China. His one continuous sorrow arose from the fact that he had no son; for his two daughters were but worthless in his eyes compared to that great desire of all Chinamen—a son to inherit his wealth, to perpetuate his name, and above all, to bury him and worship him after death.

His wife was still a handsome woman, and had been considered very lovely, as loveliness is measured among the Chinese, when she came as a bride to her husband's home twenty years before. For howsoever

you and I may judge, dear reader, Chinese women are beautiful in some folk's eyes, and their charms are as attractive to friend Chinaman as are those of the bonny lassies who win the hearts of the poor deluded youth of our own country.

Lingsam had inherited her mother's beauty. "How awfully frightful!" a young English lady would have exclaimed on seeing her and beholding her flat nose, her almond-shaped eyes, her high forehead, and stiffly painted cheeks. She had also inherited her father's brain-power, and he was reckoned a "cute old chap" by the American agents. She had learned to read and write fairly well—a not universal accomplishment among her class in China. She had withal a strong, vivid imagination, which found vent in day-dreaming.

This was Lingsam's great pastime, to imagine to herself what other people and what other lands were like; also to plan what wonderful things she would have done had she been a boy, for she ardently shared in the bitter regret her sex had caused. She would wonder, too, if she should ever live to be a grandmother, or perchance even a great-grandmother—that highest ambition of the women of the land of the wise Confucius—and would picture how, if she ever attained that great honour, the most beautiful arch should be built to her memory.

But most frequently of all she would dream

waking dreams of him, the husband that was to be, hoping he would be young and handsome, and oft-times praying with all her heart that the stars might be propitious to her. For, unlike many Chinese girls, her parents had not betrothed her in infancy.

As Lingsam's yawn concluded the door opened, and a portly woman entered the room.

"I am so glad you have come," cried Lingsam.

"Why," said the other, "are you tired? See what my daughter sent me to-day as a present," she added, as she held up for admiration a very bright and gorgeous piece of silk.

"It is lovely!" exclaimed Lingsam, as she felt the soft folds. "How I wish Wang-fu was here to see it! Oh, I do miss her so much, Ning-pu!" and the girl looked up with eyes wet with the tears which the name of her beloved sister had caused to start.

"I am sure you do; but I know you have a headache, which makes you feel extra sad and lonely this evening. You had better come to bed, though it is yet early," said the servant.

To Ning-pu that word *bed* meant a cure for all ills; so folding up her new possession and putting it aside, she bent down and took Lingsam on her back, as this little slave of fashion found walking very painful, her tiny "lily feet" being nearly helpless, and she was therefore largely dependent on her vulgarly large-

footed servant for locomotion. She was as glad as any child of a ride pig-a-back such as Ning-pu now gave her.

Ere many minutes had elapsed Lingsam was peacefully asleep, unconscious that ere the setting sun revisited the Flowery Land she would have learned many strange lessons and have undergone many strange experiences.

Time sped on, and the tocsin had already sounded its warning note whilst Li Francho was returning home in his chair from a banquet given by a friend, whereat he had partaken of many good messes, from bird's-nest soup to puppy-dogs' tails, an especially favourite dish of his. He was feeling (is not this the result of a good dinner wherever eaten ?) particularly well pleased with himself and with the world in general.

But his consternation was great when on arriving at the street where he dwelt he heard cries of "Fire! fire!" and saw men hurrying by him in all the excitement such an event as a conflagration ever arouses in the human mind. But soon his dismay was infinitely increased, for on drawing nearer he discovered that it was his own house which was being rapidly reduced to a burning mass of flame. The red tongues of fire shot high up into the sky, and great volumes of smoke rolled out of the tiny windows. The portal

had been long before broken in by the excited crowd, and in the courtyard were gathered many “heathen Chinee,” as Bret Harte would have designated them, gesticulating wildly as they made frantic efforts to subdue the flames. There was ample cause for terror and alarm, for, as they knew only too well, when a fire breaks out in such a city as Sin-tau, ofttimes a quarter or even half the town is destroyed.

High above his Chinese companions towered a tall young Englishman, whose athletic form showed to advantage as he directed the emptying of pails of water on a dangerous spot by pantomimic actions worthy of a Jack-tar. He looked as though he enjoyed the “lark,” as he expressed it; for Tom Towers was a thorough sailor, and made a plentiful use of that much-abused but most expressive language “slang.” He talked incessantly—for Tom’s tongue was never quiet—to a fellow-countryman, an earnest-looking young doctor, who only sometimes heard his remarks; for he was very busy in endeavouring to calm and quiet matters, realizing that there was very little chance of saving the house unless the motley crowd around were reduced to some sort of order and obedience.

“I say,” remarked Tom, “was not it odd I should have a chance of such a jolly piece of work as this my last night on shore? I love fires.”

"I expect Mr. Li does not," replied Maurice Graham quietly, catching the last three words.

"Well, you must allow it is a grand sight, and no mistake.—Here, you fools, bring the water here—here, I say," Tom continued, addressing some Chinamen who stood near, uncertain which way to go. Their perplexity was by no means lessened by Tom's shouts as he, as if convinced that the more noise he made the better he would be understood, raised his voice in crescendo accents, until he ended by simply yelling at them.

"Be quiet, do," said Maurice, and he turned and bade the men come to their assistance, in excellent Chinese.

"Beastly language," answered Tom as the men came up. "Nothing celestial about it, whatever the people may be. Eva and I," he continued, "have met with a series of adventures—I must tell you about them another time—which accounts for our being out so late. We only got through the gates just before they were closed."

"Eva is never here!" cried Maurice, thoroughly startled.

"I have found her a nice little nook behind there," said Tom, pointing with his hand, "where she is as snug as possible; and then I came gaily to the rescue"

"Really, Tom, you are too careless," said Maurice Graham, much annoyed.

"Now don't fume, old man," replied Tom. "It really has not been all my fault; and Evelyn is able to take jolly good care of herself. Besides, it is not really late yet, save according to Chinese ideas." After a few minutes' pause he added, "Have you ever read Elia's essay on 'Roast Pork'?"

"Tom, you are incorrigible," said Maurice, smiling in spite of his vexation. The question recalled to his mind the vision of a large, comfortably furnished library, and he saw himself seated once again in that best-loved arm-chair beside a roaring fire, revelling in Charles Lamb's perfect description of how roast pork was first discovered. "Little did I think then—" he mused.

"I think I smell crackling," continued Tom calmly. "Hullo! what's up?" he suddenly cried.

Tom's exclamation roused Maurice from his reverie, to perceive that a great excitement was visible amongst the crowd, some of whom might be seen weeping and wringing their hands. He started forward to find out what was the matter, followed by Tom.

"It seems," he said, turning to Tom after a few inquiries made of the bystanders, "that a young girl, Mr. Li's daughter, is still in the burning house."

"By Jove, something must be done to save her!" exclaimed Tom.

"Where is the room she is in?" asked Maurice in Chinese of the crowd around.

"There!" said one of those near him, pointing to a room at the farthest end of the building. It was untouched as yet, though the one beside it was in flames.

Even as they spoke a young Chinaman might be seen making his way towards that part of the building. Every eye was on him, and all watched with bated breath as he disappeared, apparently walking straight into the flames.

"Who is he?" The question was asked in awe-struck tones.

"Hsi Ting-Chang," answered some one.

"What a plucky fellow!" cried Tom.

"God help him!" murmured Maurice.

"It is a pity so fine a man should risk his life for only a girl," said the man who had just spoken.

"Yes: it is not as if it were Li's mother. He has succeeded in saving her, though I heard say she will not get over the shock," said one.

"She has been ill lately," replied another informant.

Hsi Ting-Chang, when, horrified at the idea of a human being being left to perish unaided in those cruel flames, he had volunteered to go to the rescue, had hardly realized the extent of the danger of the daring enterprise he had undertaken. Nor did he

fully do so until he found himself alone in the room adjoining Lingsam's, and separated from the world outside by a sea of fire which was rapidly closing in upon him, and which threatened to cut off all means of escape.

“Mother!” he murmured, as the remembrance of her who loved him so devotedly came over him, and with it the quick thought, “What a fool I am to risk my life for a foolish girl of whom I know nothing!” For when men are performing heroic deeds it does not follow that their thoughts are elevated, and that they are conscious of the grandeur of their actions. Still Ting-Chang did not turn back, though every moment was precious. The flames were catching at his loose garments, and the floor of the room was burning hot, as he groped his way into the adjoining apartment and through the blinding smoke reached the bed. There he found not the object of his search, but only a tumbled quilt half tossed on to the floor, which, the moment he touched it, burst into flame, scorching his hand severely. In intense pain, and so nearly suffocated as to be unable to make any cry, he hurriedly felt with hands and feet about the rest of the room; but finding nothing human, and perceiving that to return the way he had come was rendered quite impossible by the flames, he passed through an open door he now discovered, and found himself in a narrow passage.

The girl he sought had evidently escaped before, and he had risked his life for no purpose; but he would not lose it—no, never, thought he. And fortified by this determination, he succeeded in reaching the end of the passage and escaping from the burning building. He was greeted by the shouts of the eager onlookers and their cries of “Where is she ?”

“There was no one there,” said Chang laconically, and he hurried away from the crowd around him to make, as soon as possible, his way homeward. Immediately he was alone, and the excitement had passed off, his strength, however, gave way, and being near a sheltered corner of the garden at the time, he flung himself down beneath a tree shaped to resemble a dove. It was far from being emblematical of his feelings just then.

Thus he lay, miserable, overwrought, and very disgusted with himself and all the world, until, the fire being nearly subdued, Tom Towers, more than half-an-hour later, passed by him to rejoin his neglected lady love.

“Hullo ! that is my plucky Chinaman,” said Tom to himself. “How ill he looks ! I’ll offer him a drop of brandy ; I guess he’ll need no words to make him understand—he’ll twig fast enough.” Suiting the action to the word, he put his hand into his pocket and drew therefrom a tiny flask.

The faint and weary Chang was very grateful for the Englishman's ready offer of help; but he was greatly horrified when Tom, catching sight of his poor burnt hand, laid hold of him and dragged him along at what seemed to him a tremendous pace, though only Tom's average of five miles an hour.

Tom, meanwhile, kept up a continuous flow of words, ignoring the fact that not a syllable was understood by his startled and bewildered companion.

"That's a nasty burn, old man," said Tom. "Sorry Maurice has gone home; he would have set you right in no time. Come along to Eva; she has had any amount of ambulance lessons in England, and has, I know, some cotton wool in her basket."

Tom's chatter was cut short by a bright clear voice exclaiming, "Is that you?" as they turned a sharp corner and came face to face with Evelyn Mathers.

She had hung her lantern on the low branches of a tree hard by, and the light therefrom revealed the fact that she was not alone, but that clinging to her dress was a little frightened figure, which, as Tom and Ting-Chang both intuitively guessed, was none other than the lost Lingsam.

Chang's instinct was to turn and flee; but quick Eva Mathers had soon grasped the facts of the case, and ere he had time to do so he found his hand secured, and the process of dressing it had commenced.

"How fortunate I bought that little bottle of oil for uncle this afternoon!" said Eva to Tom as she applied her improvised bandages.

The soft wool felt gratefully cool to the burnt flesh, and the presence of sympathizers soothed his ruffled mind and changed the current of Chang's thoughts. He could not but be interested in Eva Mathers, for she was the first foreign lady he had ever seen. He was struck with wonder at both the height and the complexion of the tall fair woman before him, whose slim white fingers so skilfully touched his burnt ones, and whose calm blue eyes looked approvingly, and without the least bit of shyness, into his, as she listened with a little smile on her lips to the, to him, unmitigated nonsense Tom was pouring out to her in a voice particularly loud and grating to Chang's ears, though Eva always averred it was the jolliest she had ever heard, and exactly suited Tom.

Wonder, however, changed to delight when Eva, turning to the little figure still clinging to her, called on Lingsam to assist her; and the girl obediently placed timidly on his arm her tiny hand, and in so doing unconsciously threw back partly the long wrap that until now had almost enveloped her, and stood revealed in all her charm.

Tastes differ. Tom Towers thought to himself,

“ How ugly all the Chinese are ! ” and turned to gaze again on the fair face of his betrothed ; but Chang was enchanted by the vision of Lingsam, as she stood before him, and the touch of her little hand sent a delicious thrill through all his veins. His rapture increased when Eva, having heard from Tom a rapid but graphic account of “ this fellow’s pluck,” turned to the girl and told her in Chinese the story of his gallant though vain search for her. And little Lingsam, lifting her beautiful almond-shaped eyes to him, thanked him very shyly but prettily in a low sweet voice.

Was he not, as he whispered to her, a thousand times repaid by that one look ?

“ How handsome, how noble he is ! ” she thought, but did not speak again.

Thus they stood for a few moments, he gazing at her with passionate admiration as if she were a being straight from another world, a glorious revelation of grace and beauty, and as though he would take, in that long, long look, a mental photograph of her before she should vanish from his enraptured sight, to bear ever in his mind as a joy in trouble, a medicine in sickness, an encouragement to deeds of valour.

And she, apparently looking nowhere save on the grass at her feet, managed, however, to learn his face by heart, and to imprint it effectually on her memory.

Then something dreadful happened.

Who has not heard of the effect of bad example? If any who reads this has not, let him meditate deeply on the following paragraphs and learn henceforth to be doubly careful of his words and actions, being more fully aware of the unconscious influence, baneful or otherwise, he ever exercises on others.

Many things are contagious besides scarlet fever, therefore pass not too hard a judgment on Hsi Chang.

The dressing of the poor hand was accomplished at last, and Eva was therefore free. Tom, who never minded making love in public, took advantage of the first moment of inaction to put his arm round her waist, and pressed a loving kiss on her pure white forehead; and Eva did not seem to mind, for she smiled charmingly, and lifted up her rosy lips for another; and Chang could not know they were an old engaged couple, who had promised years ago to marry as soon as they could, and were quite used to this sort of thing.

Seeing that Tom's lips had travelled down from the soft forehead to that invitingly upheld mouth, and trusting that they were too busy to notice him, tempted Chang, acting on the uncontrollable impulse of the moment, bent down and pressed a kiss, first on Lingsam's little hand, which still remained on his wrist, and then on her high brow. She exclaimed

naively, " You know you must not do so. It cannot be proper," and then she hid her face in Evelyn's friendly gown. But, must it be confessed ? she still left her shapely little hand within reach, which said little hand immediately received another assault from the invader, and she, alas ! submitted thereto tamely, instead of, like a little virtuous prude, administering condign punishment, as she could very well have done had she used those tremendously long nails of hers. But then what had he not done, or, to write more correctly, what had he not desired to do for her sake that very night ?

With Eva, however, it was not a case of the first time of asking, and though her lips were busy so were also her keen blue eyes. She was rather scandalized at the position affairs had taken, so with a firm " Be quiet, Tom ; this will never do," she released herself, and turning to Chang, remarked that they must really try to find Lingsam's parents, and asked him if he knew where they were.

The question, asked in Evelyn's quiet voice, brought Chang quickly back to his senses, and he replied with much confusion that he believed they had gone to Francho's partner's house in the same street, adding that he was afraid Francho had been slightly injured by a falling spar. He regretted the moment after that he had given this piece of gratuitous information,

for Lingsam was instantly thrown into a fever of anxiety.

"We will go to them at once, dear," said Evelyn. But there was an impediment in the way, and they soon discovered that owing to Lingsam's lily feet the procession was likely to prove a slow as well as a mournful one, especially as they had not even the small protection of the usual tiny pair of dainty slippers. What was to be done?

"I could not get them on by myself, and I was in such a hurry to get out of the house. I didn't want to be burnt," said Lingsam in a desolate voice.

"I'll carry her," said Tom, and was just about picking her up bodily, when a look and cry from the horrified Lingsam proved beyond doubt that she did not consider this arrangement either proper or agreeable, and had no intention of having such liberties taken with her small person. Chang then came once more to the rescue, and she was managing with his help and Evelyn's to creep painfully along—Tom bringing up the rear with the lantern, and muttering fierce imprecations on those fools of Chinese—when to her relief, yet at the same time regret, so strangely are grief and joy intermingled oftentimes in the complex nature of man, she perceived Ning-pu coming towards her.

There was no feeling of regret, however, in Ning-pu's mind at the sight of her little lady, but she was

very horrified at perceiving her companions. Making straight for Lingsam, she hoisted her on her back, and without a "by your leave" or "with your leave," simply ran off with her, unheeding her entreaties to "wait a minute," and barely giving her time for a parting glance and a wave of the hand ostentatiously to Evelyn ere she disappeared from view.

"Well, that's what I call gratitude," said Tom laughing.

"It was not her fault," said Evelyn; "the old woman simply ran away with her. I think the poor body thought we should bewitch the girl. I never saw any one in such a state as the child was in when she came upon me," she continued. "Frightened by the fire, she had managed to effect her escape, only to be still more frightened at finding herself alone outside. I had the greatest difficulty in calming her, and could not leave her for a moment. I never thought they would imagine she was still in the house."

This explanation was given both in English and Chinese, for Evelyn Mathers spoke the latter language fairly well, having spent many years of her life in China. In a very few minutes they reached the street, after passing by the burning house, now but a mass of ruin. The fire was still smouldering, and one or two people lingered about, but most of the crowd had disappeared.

As they hurried along the narrow street, Tom's lantern was of the greatest use in the darkness.

"Why cannot they light their streets with gas?" growled he, causing Evelyn to smile.—"Take care, what's your name," he added, for Chang nearly slipped.

"You forget he does not understand," said Evelyn, laughing merrily, to the utter astonishment of her Chinese companion.

Just then Dr. Graham came in sight with lanterns and a sedan-chair with its bearers.

"O Maurice, you are a welcome sight!" cried Evelyn.

"Which is most welcome—Maurice, or the chair?" asked Maurice smiling.

"Both are welcome," said Evelyn, holding out both hands to her cousin, to Chang's horror. Indeed, though outwardly calm, Evelyn had been very nervous several times that evening, and felt most grateful to think she would be soon safely housed. But she would allow no word of blame to fall upon her madcap lover.

Hsi Ting-Chang now bade them a grateful farewell with many gesticulations, but not till Tom had again offered him his "pocket companion."

"Poor fellow!" explained Tom, seeing Maurice looked surprised. "He has gone through any amount of shocks during the last hour, and needs fortifying."

CHAPTER II.

Mother.

“Les pourquois de la terre seront les alleluias des cieux.”

From an old French writer.

“ Love is indestructible :
Its holy flame for ever burneth ;
From Heaven it came, to Heaven returneth.
* * * * *
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest-time of love is there.”

SOUTHEY.

IT was noon in Sin-tau city, and very hot was the blazing sun as it shone down from a brilliant sky, making the tired eyes and weary head long irrepressibly for the soft clouds and misty horizon which make an English spring day so deliciously delightful. What does it matter if—there must always be a drawback somewhere—one is obliged to carry (for woe to that adventurous spirit that dares trust the weather and sally forth without) a defence against that shower which always comes when least expected ?

Does not the Chinaman, too, flaunt aloft his umbrella, and thereby bid defiance to the king of day ?

Very, very hot does poor Evelyn Mathers find it. She has ventured out to bid farewell to Tom—her Tom, who has sailed away “for many a day” that morning. The junk that is bearing him to the next sea-port, from whence he is to join the magnificent man-of-war of which he is one of the lieutenants, is still visible, though receding away, till soon it will have become but a speck on the ocean.

Maurice, on whose arm Eva is leaning, tries to turn her thoughts from the recent parting by talking over the events of the previous day.

“Tom saw a good specimen of the heathen Chinee, as he persists in calling them,” said he. “Hsi Ting-Chang was certainly very brave, and it was a most daring adventure ; I wonder he came out of it as well as he did. Poor fellow ! it was a shame that all his trouble and danger were for nought.”

“To think I had the little woman safe hidden away all the time !” said Evelyn. “I wish now I had insisted on going and finding her father ; but she was so nervous at the bare thought of being left alone, and I had promised Tom to stay where I was until he came for me.”

“I hope,” said Maurice smiling, “you may prove

equally obedient after marriage. You will then be a model wife."

"Did Tom tell you the sequel, Maurice?" Eva asked; and on his replying in the negative, related the latter part of the adventures of the evening before, ending by saying half laughingly, "Is it not a romantic story? It ought to end in a marriage, like a three-volume novel."

"Silly girl! you think of nothing but romance and such like folly," said Maurice in a slightly superior tone. "In this Celestial Empire marriage is always a matter of business, not of romance. It must have been," he added thoughtfully, "however, a very strange experience for a Chinaman; and you say she is pretty."

"Yes," said Evelyn hesitatingly; for Lingsam's beauty, in spite of those fawn-like eyes, was not certainly her ideal. "Anyway, he admired her very much. But I must not tell tales out of school."

A certain sense of honour prevented her from speaking of Tom's example, and how strictly Chang had followed it. It would not be fair upon him, she thought, and hastened to change the subject. Therefore she remarked rather inconsequently,—

"When are you going to get married, Maurice? When next you see a pretty girl?"

"Never!" said Maurice. The word was spoken

very firmly. The tone and manner were very quiet, but the question from her lips made his heart beat quickly and sent a sharp stab of pain through it. Maurice Graham and his cousin Evelyn had been much together, especially at one time in their lives, and he had learned to love her with all the intensity of an ardent, passionate nature ; but while he had longed and trusted, bright, quick, impetuous Tom had come, and, all unwitting of a rival, had won the "fair ladye" from him. And Maurice Graham had been obliged to subdue every eager hope and behold with aching heart his cherished day-dreams scattered to the winds. But the bitter battle had been fought, and he had conquered, now more than three years ago, and the victor had come forth from the weary strife stronger for the struggle, refined from the furnace heat, and more meet, though he knew it not, to help his fellow-men in the warfare ever raging between the good and the evil, more able to sympathize with their sufferings, more eager to pity and assist the fallen and the weak.

Evelyn's innocent question had, however, started the old wound, and again his swelling heart asked itself the bitter question, as he thought on the good he and she might have performed together amongst the lost and suffering ones of this Chinese city, and of the help and comfort she would have been to him in his

work,—“Why might not my desire have been granted if only Tom had never met her ?”

Ah, those “whys” and “ifs” of life, those insolvable problems ! Never shall they be answered till in the great Hereafter we shall read the life-story aright.

Maurice Graham had passed highly in his examinations, and was considered by his fellow-students in the hospital as one of their most promising men ; and many there were still in England who regretted the “mad folly,” as they termed it, which had caused him to decide to leave the chance of honours and advancement in his own country to others, and to go forth, following the example of Him who pleased not Himself, to labour as a medical missionary in China.

In the same city of Sin-tau, at the same time, in a quiet room, from which the rays of the burning sun were jealously excluded, and which was delightfully cool in contrast to the glare without, reclined a very finely-dressed Chinese lady.

There was a quiet, restful look on her fine, almost sternly grand face that told of present happiness ; but the lines of her forehead and the sunken look of those gentle eyes bespoke her past life to have been evidently a sad one.

Beside her sat her own dearly-loved son Hsi Ting-

Chang, and his poor burnt hand was being softly caressed by her delicate fingers.

Chang's father had died when his little boy was still but a babe ; but his mother, a clever, noble woman, had brought him up, with the help of her husband's only brother, very carefully and well. This brother had had two children — a daughter, who, as is customary in China, had been married at an early age, and an only son. This son, Hsi Yang, Chang's cousin and most intimate companion, was a very talented youth, and his father was most anxious that he should become a scholar ; so he went to Canton for the famous examinations which alone have power to bestow that honoured title, and after three days' incessant mental strain had been discovered dead in the little cell-like apartment allotted to each student, with some splendidly done papers lying before him. He had fallen a victim of competitive examinations. His father, then in ailing health, had sunk under the terrible shock of this sad news, and had followed his wife (who had died two years previously) and son very soon to an untimely grave. Thus Chang had become the sole protector and comfort of both his revered grandmother, now an old lady, and partially paralyzed, and his beloved mother, to whom he was indeed all in all.

Chang had grieved bitterly for his young cousin,

whose society he much missed, and also for his uncle, who had ever stood in the place of a father to him ; and very sad and lonely did he find the old familiar house without their presence. He spent much time with his mother, to whom he was greatly attached, and found in her his great support and help in this heavy trial which had placed him, at so young an age, at the head of his house.

Chang had no literary ambitions like his cousin, but was a sharp, clever merchant. He had lately become partner in a well-known firm, and was getting on “like a house on fire,” or, more emphatic still, “like a steam-engine,” as Tom Towers would have expressed it, these being his two favourite phrases for indicating that, in his humble opinion, a man was successful.

Chang was, as already stated, much attached to his mother, whom he sincerely honoured ; but who can adequately describe her feeling of ardent love and admiration for him, her beloved son, the one brightness in her life of sorrow and widowed loneliness—the centre of her hopes, around whom her highest dreams ever wove themselves—her only treasure, her joy, and her pride ?

English mothers, with your little ones leaning on your knees, over whom you weave bright fancies for their future, with your young sturdy sons, of whom you are so proud, just entering on life’s battle, and

looking forward to that same future through roseate spectacles, surely you can well sympathize with this Chinese mother's love for her only child.

And you who have a mother's heart beating within you, though maybe it has never been your lot to have little arms clinging around your neck in fond embrace, nor tiny lips that call you by that sweetest of names—by the love that you would surely have bestowed on such a treasure, had it ever been yours, think tenderly on this Eastern mother and her son.

Ye Britons, whose greatest power for blessing is in the reverence and love pertaining to your own homes ; you fathers, who are ever ready to guide and help your sons, even where you are obliged to blame them, and who rejoice to see in them the vigour and power, the longings and aspirations of your own lost youth, pity and admire this widowed mother and her fatherless son, whom she has so carefully trained to be as he is—earnest, gallant, noble, the stay and comfort of those weak hearts dependent now upon him.

Chang had been giving his mother a short account of his thrilling adventure of last night, and though he had tried to make as light of it as possible, her maternal instinct told her he had been in danger, and thus he seemed doubly precious to her to-day. Chang, gazing at her and seeing the look of absorbing

love and devotion in her brilliant eyes, asked himself again the question, "What would she have done had anything happened to me?" and thinking on his narrow escape and the tremendous fight he had had with death, rejoiced with a thankful heart, not only for his own sake, but because his mother had thereby been spared a cruel trial.

Silence reigned in the quiet room, deep silence, until at last the mother broke it by saying in tremulous tones, "My son, you must promise me never to risk your life so again. Remember you have a mother who could never survive your loss. Can any one's life be of such value to you as mine? And it would kill me, I am sure, if anything happened to you," she went on excitedly. "Promise me, Chang, my beloved, my obedient son, never again so to risk your precious life; promise, for my sake!"

"Hush, mother! be at rest," he said, striving to calm her. "You can surely trust me, and I promise to be very, very careful. And I tell you it was but a little affair after all, hardly worth mentioning, only I feared you would hear extravagant accounts."

"Of course you make light of it, but I know better," said his mother, who in her heart of hearts was exceedingly proud of her son's behaviour, and not at all inclined to minimise the danger. "Just look at your poor dear hand how burnt it is," she continued.

“ Who wrapped it up like this for you ? ” and she pointed to Evelyn’s bandages.

“ An Englishman helped me , ” he answered after a short hesitation. He did not wish to tell his mother about Evelyn, or to mention his interview with little Lingsam, which he feared might displease her, as she could hardly realize the exceptional circumstances of the case. How lovely the girl had looked, how sweet she had been ! And he lost himself in dreams of her.

It was fortunate for him that the mother-of-pearl which in wealthy homes in China does duty for glass is not noted for the amount of light that it admits, else surely his confusion would have revealed itself. As it was, his mother now put down his hesitation to his knowledge of her dislike of foreigners, and remained therefore still in blissful ignorance that, whether for good or whether for evil, another image had usurped the place she had hitherto held in her son’s heart.

“ Were there many foreigners there ? ” These were the first words that aroused Chang from his short dream of love. “ Why do you not answer me ? ”

“ You mean last night , ” he replied, giving himself mentally a slight shake. “ Only two—Mr. Graham and another young fellow with red hair, very ugly, but who worked very hard at putting out the fire.

It was he who gave me a helping hand ; also a drink of something out of a bottle—medicine, I suppose."

"I hope it will not hurt you," said his mother anxiously. "I should be very sorry for you to become intimate with those horrid foreigners," she continued.

"Why, mother, I could not speak to him. He did not know a word of our language, stupid fellow. Mr. Graham did the translating for him." Chang did not think it necessary to name another fair interpreter.

After a few minutes' more fitful conversation, Chang said he was going out to inquire after Francho, and disappeared.

Hsi Nancho watched her son as he left the room, and then, after breathing forth one long sigh, became lost in thought.

Love, thou art the great interpreter of hearts ! Thou readest not by words alone, but by the power of intense sympathy canst tell every sign, dost note the meaning of every look. Thou claimest in thy perfection on earth (though that perfection is but like unto the moonlight, only the, at best, feeble reflection of the glorious sun, or like the tiny pool that in its greatest fulness is as a drop in the far-reaching swelling ocean) the privilege of suffering with the loved one's grief, though the cause be all unknown ; of rejoicing in that beloved's joy, though it bring not joy

to thy own heart ; of losing sight of self in absorbing concentration to the object of devotion.

This is the rarest, greatest, and oftentimes saddest possession of mortal man, the holiest and noblest emotion of the heart, the most precious gift of Him whose name is Love.

Few, however, love thus. With most, alas ! this most hallowed feeling is desecrated by that many-headed monster Self, and the very love men pride themselves on becomes after all but a form of self-worship, and the great question in the poor vain heart is not, " What is really best for the being I love ? " but, " What can bring that beloved one nearer to me ? How can I best keep what I have won ? " Seldom, indeed, even in true, faithful hearts does the great big *I* become completely subdued ; seldom does jealousy, that frightful jealousy, the bane of love, the shadow of the sunlight, fail to find a loophole through which to enter the citadel of the mind, there to sow the bitter seed of discord.

" Jealousy is cruel as the grave," wrote the wise king of old, and those who have paused to ponder the ways of men, and consider cause and effect, have pronounced this sad judgment, that more crime and more misery are traceable to this fungus of earth, this canker of heaven's fairest flower, than to any other source.

Is it not selfishness, that evil genius of man, which

makes it possible to write of few, indeed, the words now penned about Chang's mother—She loved her son better than herself?

Though she rejoiced greatly in her darling's heroism, though her mother's heart swelled with pride as she thought upon his gallant conduct, her sympathetic love told her something had happened—that her son was altered. "Still he is good and loving to me," she thought. "He would tell me if any news had to be told." She trusted him because she loved him.

What had given her the clue?

"Strange of him," she said half aloud, "never to turn round to give me a last look as usual. I never knew him not to do so before. What could he have been thinking of? Something pleasant, for he is in good spirits. Still something makes me wish more than ever that he had been at home last night."

The entrance of the servant disturbed her.

"Your mother desires your attendance in her room," said the woman.

"I come at once," she answered, and mounted on the servant's back, proving a heavy burden, for she was decidedly corpulent; but the "human pony" was accustomed to her load. For the next few hours Nancho was very busy, so had but little time for thought before Chang reappeared, to find his meal ready and waiting.

Later on, when Chang's grandmother, a very old lady, had retired to rest, having first laid her yellow bony hand on his head as he prostrated himself before her with deferential reverence, mother and son found themselves alone together again.

Chang had no desire to return to his now lonely part of the house, in which the remembrance of his uncle and favourite young cousin ever returned sadly to him, and especially not now at present, for he was feeling "down," his visit not having been at all a success, and also he was suffering from the reaction of yesterday. Francho had been too ill to see him, having been more hurt than was first supposed, and he had been obliged to come away without hearing aught of the sweet girl whose image filled his mind. He thought regretfully of Tom and Evelyn.

"I suppose they are happy together. How I envy them!" he sighed, as in imagination he pictured them once more as he had beheld them yesterday, her sweet face uplifted to his with that calm look of quiet contentment on it, and he with his sturdy arm encircling her little waist, while he chatted and laughed, showing his white teeth.

And, as usual, that great "bungler" Imagination pictured it all wrong. Tom was keeping lonely watch, and gazing soberly into the dark sea, inclined to assert, if any one had been by to whom to assert

it, that the world was very flat in his opinion just then, though such assertion would have been in direct contradiction to all the geographical lessons of his childhood, when he used to be told that it was as round as an orange. And Eva Mathers knelt in the plain little chapel on the hill, her blue eyes full of tears as she joined in the prayer offered for those at sea, and in a voice low with emotion breathed forth an "Amen" to the petition that "they might be brought unto their desired haven."

"Chang," said his mother, "tell me what makes you so very silent."

"Am I silent, mother?" he answered. "I was thinking."

"What about?" Then seeing him hesitate—"You had rather not tell me. I see something is on your mind; but as you will, my son, only, believe me, there is no place where a son can better dispose of a secret than in his mother's heart."

Then after a moment's pause she continued,—

"You did not eat your dinner, although I so carefully chose your favourite dishes. Are you ill or unhappy?"

"I fear to vex you, mother," he answered. "But who can withstand your loving invitation? I must tell you."

So out came his story in a low, agitated voice,

and the poor burnt hand she was holding quivered, she felt, with emotion ; but she only held it closer still.

Now Nancho, though she had noticed the untouched meal, had never guessed at such a romantic cause ; for she was not an English mother of a large family of sons. And to say she was not scandalized and horrified would not be true ; indeed, neither of these words, not even the latter, explains her sensations sufficiently graphically. She was completely overwhelmed. It is always hard on a mother to find herself supplanted—to have to be number two where once she was first ; to know that though the love to her may be and often is as deep and true as ever, it can never be the same as before, for other joys, other interests, other thoughts have come between her and her child. Most English mothers, though, are in some ways prepared for and expecting “their boys,” as they still call them, to fall in love ; whereas Nancho had never dreamt of such a thing. Of course Chang, she knew, would marry some day,—but for their mourning, she would have set about getting him a wife before. She looked forward to having little ones, his children, playing around her knee, and growing up to comfort and support her in her old age. But this was very different, and she did not understand it.

For to fall in love—words common enough in

England, often misused and abused—is an unusual thing in China, the manners and customs of the people preventing it from being anything but an exception to the rule.

“ Most improper,” thought Nancho ; “ fearful ! My son alone with two foreigners, who do not really count, and a pretty girl ; and she must be pretty, or Chang would not rave so.”

He was just then dilating on her most abundant hair, lustrous, fawn-like eyes, coral lips, tiny feet, and exquisite voice.

“ How could she let you do it ?” were the first words she uttered in a low voice, making Chang rampant. He had just illustrated what a kiss was on her forehead, causing thereby the deep colour to mantle under her painted cheeks.

“ It was all my fault,” he cried. “ And really I could not help it, she was so pretty ; and there was that other fellow a-loving the lady, and putting his arm round her waist even.” Chang hoped that by pointing out Tom’s awful misdeeds his own might appear a shade less black.

“ Those wretched foreigners ! I hate them. I never thought my son would follow their example, and such an example also !” Her tone was severe ; but the culprit felt his hand was still safe in her tender grasp, and he grew more hopeful.

"Did not the young lady nearly kill you for your presumption?" said she.

"She is very young, mother; and"—here Chang (as he was usually called) looked Nancho full in the face—"would you not have rather liked it if you had been in her place? Would you have killed me?"

This was carrying the war into the enemy's country with a vengeance, but the daring assault proved successful. Nancho looked at her adored son, in whom she could see no fault, and smiled. She could not help it; and Chang was enchanted, feeling he had won the victory.

"She might have kept her veil on at least," said Nancho, determined not to yield herself prisoner at once.

"It fell off accidentally. It did indeed, mother," answered Chang with eagerness. "I am sure she is as good as she is beautiful."

"A most improper situation," remarked Nancho.

"She could not help it, mother. It was all the fault of the fire. She was frightened, of course."

"How I wish it had never broken out! Our Feng-shui* must have been offended, or my dear son would not have been there surely. Our house

* The name for the family spirits, much dreaded in China. If trouble comes, it is always thought that the Feng-shui are offended.

seems doomed to be unfortunate," sighed poor Nancho to herself.

"It was all those wretched foreigners," she exclaimed. "They put the idea into your head."

"Do you mean the kiss? It was very naughty, I allow, but very nice." Or rather Chang used the equivalent in Chinese to that most convenient, emphatic, but most incongruously used little word in the English language.

"I am very glad I have told you all," said Chang. "I am sure I could have no better confidant than you."

These words rewarded Nancho for having so resolutely suppressed those jealous pangs which had arisen in her heart.

"You will love her as your own daughter, will you not?" Chang continued.

"If she makes you happy, I shall be content," said poor Nancho with truth, though the future looked very black to her just then. "So you wish to marry her?"

"I must! I will!" exclaimed Chang. "And you will help me?" he added coaxingly.

"Yes, if you will be patient and leave it all to me. I foresee, though, many difficulties. Suppose your horoscopes do not agree."

Chang looked heart-broken.

"Mind," continued his mother, "this story must not transpire, for her sake if not for your own,"—which last little speech showed her woman's wit, also her woman's dread of the Chinese Mrs. Grundy, the most formidable of all old ladies in the Celestial Empire, and as important an individual there as she is in enlightened England of the nineteenth century.

The ice once broken, Chang talked on and on, raving as only lovers can rave about her he adored, and horrifying thereby his gentle mother, unused to *les affaires des cœurs*, until at last he betook himself to bed to dream of his lady love.

And then poor Nancho found relief in the shedding of those tears she had so bravely restrained while she had sympathized with, cheered, and comforted her son.

"Why, oh why should this strange adventure have happened to *her* son? What had she done that the fates should be so hard on her?" she sobbed.

But no answer came as yet to Maurice Graham's or to her question, Why?

CHAPTER III.

Day=Dreams.

“But there’s nothing half so sweet in life
As Love’s young dream.”

MOORE.

IT was some days before Francho was able to be moved into the new house hurriedly taken for him and his family, and very many weeks elapsed before he was sufficiently recovered to return to his business. But the desired event came to pass at last, and now life was following the same current as before the fire; and so trifling is the mark left often by the most exciting events on the minds of men, that by the anniversary most of the household had forgotten the very fact.

Li Francho had been so ill for some time after the events related in the first chapter, that his wife had seldom left his side; and satisfied at her daughter’s safe return, had never questioned her at all, and thus Lingsam had been able without difficulty to keep her secret, especially as owing to Li’s injuries he had not

been present at the time of Chang's gallant though useless attempt to save little Lingsam, and therefore knew nothing about it.

She was sitting on a stiff, high-backed chair by the window on the anniversary of that fateful evening, watching the setting sun as it dipped below the horizon.

The house they now occupied did not please Francho at all, the wall that surrounded it being to his ideas of propriety far too low, especially on one side ; but his landlord absolutely refused to have it raised, lest thereby the spirit of his father might be turned against him, and therefore Francho had determined to leave it as soon as he could conveniently do so. Also, the apartments of the women, being to the side of the house, were not secluded enough to suit his Chinese ideas of propriety.

Thus it was that the room Lingsam now occupied, the house being built on a hill, had (a most unusual thing for China) a fair view, not indeed of the surrounding streets, but of the level land beyond the city gates, through which the river meandered slowly, and of the distant sea ; while straight in front might be seen the top stories of a tall gilded pagoda, beside which stood, like guardian angels, two tall trees.

Lingsam was in appearance nothing altered, save that she had grown a little more womanly. Her

tiny hand supported her still tinier foot, of which she was so foolishly proud ; but she was hardly conscious of her attitude, for this is not an unusual fashion with Chinese ladies. She had managed to slip out the mother-of-pearl panes from the window. Had her mother known, she would have got well scolded, if not punished, for such audaciousness ; but Chinese girls, as well as English, are naturally curious.

There was a bright smile on her coral lips ; but her eyes had a far-away, dreamy expression, for Ling-sam's thoughts were wool-gathering. She was busy with a "*Château d'Espagne*," one of those fairy fabrics so rapidly and easily erected, but unstable as that air after which they are sometimes called.

The view before her, the sight of that wide ocean, now seemingly a flood of golden light, had made her think of other lands divided from China by that far-reaching sea, and she wondered if the girls of those countries were like her at all in their thoughts and feelings. Then the remembrance of Eva Mathers—tall, fair, simple—came into her mind. She was the only foreign lady she had ever seen. "If only they are all like her," she thought, "I think they must be very nice. She was so kind and gentle. But I did not like that horrid, red-haired man who was with her." (Tom's hair was sandy coloured in reality.) "He was so ugly, and laughed so much, and made my head

ache—talk, talk, talk ; but I suppose that she was his wife, and so obliged to put up with him." For this is how Lingsam in her mind had settled matters.

But the smile which lingered on the lips of little Lingsam was not caused by the remembrance of sweet Evelyn Mathers, however, but by the train of thought engendered therefrom, for her mind was full of him who had spoken to her, and whose lips had pressed her forehead that eventful, strange, awful, yet happy night, since when twelve full moons had passed away ; of him who had tried to save her at his own personal peril, and with whom, when she had been borne away so impetuously, she had left her most priceless possession, her heart's love, as he faded away into the darkness of night.

Never had she seen or heard of him again, but her thoughts were often busy about him, her hero ; and fancy wove sweet dreams of him, of his beauty and greatness, and she would live again those happy moments, and almost feel the touch of his lips on her hand, and would embrace those tiny fingers he had handled, thinking how thereby they had been consecrated. The remembrance of how tenderly he had helped her faltering steps, and how admiringly he had looked at her, would send a thrill of delight through her foolish little frame.

But blame her not too severely. Are not all

women born with the fatal propensity of falling in love (that is, if we may believe the poets and historians)—of being drawn, oftentimes unaccountably, towards another kindred spirit? And little Lingsam was not the first, nor will she be the last, of her sex to be conquered and captivated at first sight; for since those days, now long ago, when Queen Dido found and lost her recreant swain, many a noble woman has yielded herself to one of whom she knows nothing.

Remember, too, Lingsam, though she had never beheld her love again, had seen or heard none else. He with the “bright blue eye” had never appeared to change the current of her thoughts, and to cause those dark-brown orbs, which used to be considered so very interesting, to fade away out of remembrance; nor had another voice come to whisper the same sweet story in her ear; nor was there with her a busy present claiming bewildering and concentrated attention, thus thrusting out the memory of the past. So ever since her eyes had looked into his, when they had met and parted in the night, his image had held royal sway in her heart; and the flower of love bloomed there brightly, all the more so because none knew her secret, and the story of her love was a sacred possession, belonging to herself alone. Only Lingsam used to think sometimes that Ning-pu had

guessed, especially since a little incident which had occurred a month or two before.

Lingsam (more fortunate than Chang in this respect) had had a treasure as dear to her as the photo laid by in a carefully locked drawer, or the fair curl in the simple gold locket, or the little note in *his* handwriting, and therefore not consigned, as most correspondence, to the hungry flames—those little keepsakes of English ladies, whereby generally hangs a tale, oftentimes sad, sometimes happy in its ending. One day, however—an unfortunate day for little Lingsam—she was busy at her embroidery in her mother's room, when Ning-pu entered and began to detail some news of the town to her mistress, who was an inveterate gossip; but much as she loved a bit of scandal, she had no desire for her daughter to overhear the conversation, so ordered her to take her work to a far-off corner of the room.

Lingsam obeyed willingly enough, for she was not naturally an inquisitive girl, being too much occupied with her own thoughts and feelings to care much for outside things. But she was not much in the humour for work; and so seeing she was unnoticed, and judging from the sound of the voices as they rose and fell that the subject of discussion was a highly interesting one, and that she was not likely to be remembered soon, she began to indulge herself in

that most pleasing of occupations — namely, day-dreaming. Some fresh-gathered flowers near her caused memory to recall the thought of Eva Mathers to her mind; and to think of Eva meant to live again in fancy that evening and night which stood out in high relief to the other evenings of her monotonous life. Then Lingsam had bethought her of feasting her eyes on her treasure, and drew it out from where in her robe it lay safely hidden. She passed her hand lightly over it. It was not very beautiful, nor very uncommon, maybe its intrinsic value was but trifling, but to her it was a treasure indeed, and she pressed it to her lips; for had it not belonged to him? had he not worn it once? She felt she quite loved it.

"Lingsam, whatever have you got there, my girl? One of your father's buttons, I declare! Give it to me at once." Little, horrified Lingsam submissively, but with aching heart, yielded it up, turning quite white the while, only the profusion of red paint on her cheeks prevented this being perceived.

"I found it," she gasped. "Oh, do let me keep it!"

"Your father's button, my dear! whatever do you want with it? It will do again; it is not worn out. Now show me your work," and careful Mrs. Francho put the button away in a little box hard by.

Poor Lingsam spent a most miserable evening; and

when she was borne off to bed by the faithful Ning-pu, she could not restrain her tears, but wept passionately until she succeeded in crying herself to sleep. It was when she thought about Ning-pu's discreet silence with regard to these tears that she felt perhaps Ning-pu had at least partly guessed her secret.

But this had happened earlier in the year, and to-night Lingsam had naught to aid her dreams but her own lively imagination. She lay wondering if she should see him, *her love*, again, and almost wishing another fire might come to pass, if only it would bring on its wings her hero, when the door opened, and as had happened that night year, the portly person of Ning-pu presented itself to her gaze.

"Surely, Ning-pu, it is too early for bed?" said Lingsam, very happy in her dreams, and much vexed at the interruption.

"Your parents desire your presence," said Ning-pu.
"I have come to fetch you to them."

Lingsam obeyed with alacrity, and was soon standing before them.

Her father and mother were seated side by side, looking very important, and a sudden awful fear crept into her heart, and made her remember what had not hitherto struck her particularly—namely, that all the household had had a rather mysterious "I-know-something" air lately.

Her worst fears were soon realized, for her mother, in what seemed to her daughter's highly-strung nerves a very harsh, abrupt way, having preluded her statement with, "I have some important news for you," told her that her father and she had arranged her betrothal, and subsequent marriage in two months' time.

"It is a most excellent marriage for you, Lingsam," she remarked; "and we have altered all our previous arrangements for your sake. Everything has been done in the most satisfactory manner, and your father and I are much pleased. The astrologers have been consulted, and prophesy all good fortune, as in the case of your elder sister; and your father and uncle have interviewed your future husband."

"Everybody has been consulted but I," thought poor Lingsam; for, wrapt up in her own thoughts, the idea had never entered her mind (or if it had, she, as most of us do with disagreeable thoughts, had cast it aside) of this most likely, nay, certain event happening—at any rate just yet, for she was still younger now than her sister was when she was married. Therefore the shock was proportionately great and overwhelming.

She stood like a statue while her mother continued,—

"See, here are the bracelets. Are they not beautiful?" and producing a couple of handsome bangles,

prepared to fasten them on her wrists. This was too much.

With a passionate cry she threw herself down on the ground, hysterically screaming,—

“I won’t—I can’t—I shan’t! Never! never! I don’t want to be married!” she cried. “It is horrid—I hate it so!” and she sobbed violently, her whole frame shaking with the emotion she vainly strove to hide, her slight figure convulsed with grief.

“My dear child!” said her father in a tone of remonstrance.

Both parents were aghast at the manner in which their news was received; and so were her grandmother and uncle and aunts, who were all present.

“Father, oh, father, do not send me away!” she implored, clinging to his knee.

“But, my dear, you must marry,” said her father. “And it is a very good marriage—a most estimable man.”

“I do not want to marry him, father!” said Lingsam, stamping her tiny foot. “I want to stay at home.”

“You are behaving disgracefully!” interposed her mother severely. “Instead of being so naughty, you ought to be grateful to your father for all the trouble and care he has taken in this matter. You are, I assure you, a most fortunate woman. Every one speaks highly of your future husband.”

"I hate him! Don't name him!" howled Lingsam, throwing herself down on the floor again in her abandonment of grief and utter loss of self-restraint. "Oh, my love, what shall I do!"

"You should be ashamed of yourself, you wicked girl!" shrieked her mother angrily. "I have never heard of such behaviour before."

"Oh, stop this; it is awful!" exclaimed Francho, who had all a Chinaman's horror of scenes; and then he called Ning-pu in a voice which caused that worthy to appear in quite a flutter.

"Take Lingsam to her room!" demanded her mistress in furious tones.

This was easier said than done, for by this time Lingsam hardly knew what she was saying or doing, and she struggled violently, declaring she wished she was dead, and she would stay where she was and no one should touch her; and it was some minutes ere she was triumphantly borne by the now angry Ning-pu from the room, kicking and screaming, her impotent misery being in no wise decreased by overhearing her mother remark to Francho,—

"I pity her husband. She is a little spit-fire. She has been spoiled since her sister left us;" and his reply,—

"He'll manage her fast enough. A fine man, who looks as if he would rule."

After some more struggles she was safely put to bed, and left alone sobbing and screaming until, under the influence of fatigue, she began to quiet down ; only a low, deep moan breaking out now and again testified that though the tempest was over the deep was troubled still.

“ My darling ! my hero ! ” she thought, “ I must not dream of meeting you any more ; and if I did, should I not be married to another horrid man ? Wretch ! I know he will beat me and make me miserable, and will perhaps kill me if he ever knows of that night. But he need not know,” and she smiled. No, her secret was still her own. If only mother and father had not guessed ; but perhaps they would not understand her hasty words. “ How tired I am ! I ache all over,” she thought ; and then her weariness overcame every other sensation, and she sank into a kind of stupor which ended in sleep, though only of a restless, unrefreshing sort.

Judge her not too hardly, kind reader, for she was only an uneducated Chinese lady—not very old, not very clever, not, in fact, a heroine at all in the conventional use of the word. Her brain had never been trained by problems of Euclid and conic sections ; she had never heard of the philosophy of Aristotle, or read of the great and good men and women of the past from whom our ideal of the heroic has been

formed, and whose lives, like sweet perfume from dead flowers, still emulate others to like deeds of valour and self-sacrifice.

Nor had she been “finished” at a grand finishing school, or by a year of foreign travel, when she might have learned from that truest, best-remembered book, personal experience, the facts—whether comforting or otherwise who shall say?—that she was not alone in her sorrow; that her moan of pain was but one note of that deep, low, minor chord of woe which is ever arising from this world of crime and misery, though oftentimes drowned to human ears by the ringing music of earthly joy and the wild jargon of noisy merriment.

In that very city Maurice Graham was wrestling with an aching pain at his heart and an utter feeling of desolation which he had been striving vainly to conquer all day, and wisely seeking strength from Him who is, as Maurice had often proved before, “a ready help in time of trouble,” and who, he knew—and the knowledge was sweet indeed—loved him with an everlasting love.

The night wore on, and all was still in the house when Lingsam suddenly awoke. She lay thinking sadly of her hard fate, and tossing restlessly to and fro on her bed, almost wishing she had never seen Chang, had never been initiated into the joys and,

alas ! the woes of love, until at last, after coming to the conclusion that there was no one on earth half so miserable as she was, she nearly determined to destroy herself.

With that strange sequence of thought which is one of the most unaccountable sides of our complex nature, this thought led her on to remembering a tiny knife given to her father by a foreign friend, and which one day he had told her she might have to keep. She now recalled how she had left it in the other room, when she had been summoned before her parents, instead of replacing it in its case. In the restless fit now upon her, to remain quiet seemed impossible, so she rose and dragged herself slowly across the room in quest of her favourite possession. Entering the other apartment, which was close by, as quietly as possible for fear of disturbing any one—for it was the middle of the night—she found all was exactly as she had left it, and made her way as quickly as possible (it was quite a long way for her) to the couch whereon she had been lying that afternoon dreaming of *him*. “How different it all is now!” she thought wearily. “Oh the misery of life!” And then she saw that the mother-of-pearl panes she had removed had not been replaced, and turned to look out at the view. “How lovely!” she thought.

In the foreground was the garden wall, very black

and sombre, the darkness intensified by the long shadows thrown by the trees which, as it were, kept guard over the pagoda, and from the pagoda itself.

From this said pagoda hung many little lights, gleaming like myriad fire-flies. Beyond lay the dark belt of swampy land; and further off still the sea, that same sea which had a few hours before reflected on its surface the sunset glory light. Over it now the moon had cast her silver sheen, and formed a fairy pathway, calm and white.

Lingsam, as she paused and looked, felt the calm peace of the moonlight—that peculiar calmness which those soft beams, so pure, so still, so removed from the jar and turmoil of the day, ever breathe into the hearts of those who stay to listen to their message—steal softly over her; and she quietly determined, as she gazed on that peaceful scene, and thought on the grace of patience, to resign herself obediently to her lot in life, and bear bravely her new trials, because she knew it would be right to submit herself dutifully to her parents.

Thus, though she knew not the Book of books, she learned a lesson that night from God's great book of nature. "There is no speech nor language but their voice is heard amongst them."

Far, far away from the great Chinese Empire, in

one of the eastern counties of England, lies nestling beneath the frowning cliffs the little town of B——, with its one long straggling street, which leads right past the glorious old church, a fine strictly Norman building, on to the pebbly beach, where the blue sea plays at bo-peep with the bright little pools covered with vivid-coloured seaweed, beneath which hide the shy anemone.

The fine old church was filled to overflowing this summer morning by both rich and poor from miles around. On both sides of the red carpet—sure sign of a wedding—stood the school children, with their little hands full of flowers, their faces extra clean for the occasion, and bright with smiles.

The sun having succeeded in his struggle with a dark bank of clouds which had made sad-minded folk shake their heads solemnly earlier in the day, and obtained his desire to be a witness of the ceremony, peeped gaily through the stained-glass windows, and kissed the white-robed, white-veiled bride. It was Eva Mathers who knelt before the altar-rail, her father's hand resting on her head with a fond pressure as his soft voice uttered in trembling tones the solemn blessing ere she rose to enter upon her new duties and pleasures as a loving and beloved wife.

She had scarce risen from her knees ere Tom, much to the detriment of her bridal veil, placed his saucy

arm round her slim waist and administered just such a hearty kiss on her rosy lips as the one that had proved so contagious to poor Chang but a year ago. Then he carried her home at quick-march time to the rectory, where a simple repast was laid on the dining-table, and the newly-made wife performed her first wifely duty by cutting her wedding-cake with much dignity and decorum, until her roguish husband informed her quizzingly that she had a pigtail, pulling the while a straggling curl which had escaped from the confinement of hairpins to wander at its own sweet will.

As Evelyn recaptured the golden rebel, her thoughts, being influenced by the magnetic word pigtail, flew away to far-off China and her Chinese lovers, as she ever called them in her own mind.

"I wish they might be as happy as Tom and I are," she thought, "for they could not be happier. I must ask Maurice if he knows anything about them when I write to thank him for his present," and she glanced at a Chinese cabinet in the corner of the room. "Poor Maurice! I wish he was here."

Poor Maurice was kneeling in his little, un-English-like room in far-away China, and praying that she whom he loved might be blessed with wedded happiness. "Tom will make her a good husband," he thought, striving to keep down the rebellious pain in his own heart.

But Eva, on her wedding-day, had but little time for reminiscences, for she had to hurry soon to catch the train which was to take them to the lovely Scottish city where they had first met, there to spend those happy weeks which were to elapse before Tom went to sea again.

CHAPTER IV.

The Wedding-Day.

“ She’s beautiful, and therefore to be wooed ;
She is a woman, therefore to be won.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE next two months fled by on the rapid wings of time all too fast to please either happy Evelyn or sad little Lingsam, to whom it seemed as if the days flew away. Every one was full of business ; for there were the wedding-robe to be made and sent to the expectant bridegroom, and the *trousseau* presented by him to his affianced bride to be overhauled and examined by all the female relatives of the household.

Even Lingsam, sad as she felt, would not have been human had she not been pleased with this part of the programme, especially as one and all combined to pronounce it to be a particularly fine one ; and certainly, as she could not but admit when she glanced in the mirror, she did look very lovely in some of the robes. If only *he* could see her, especially in that

lovely pink and silver embroidered one which suited her so well.

Lingsam had been quite ill for a day or two after the scene just described, the shock and over-excitement telling on her delicate constitution; and her mother had considered it best never again to refer to her daughter's, to her unenlightened understanding, most remarkable reception of the news of her betrothal. And Lingsam, though she had often wept in secret since, had never by word or sign made again any protest against her fate; only her little face wore a look of patient endurance hardly in keeping with her youth, and she was very pensive and quiet.

One day, however, when her mother had been descanting on the beauty of those bracelets which Lingsam had at first so rebelliously refused, but which she had since resignedly accepted, and which said bracelets were the cause of much satisfaction to her relations on account of their size and beautiful workmanship, of a sudden a brilliant smile had illuminated her face, caused by a rapid thought full of rapture which darted into her mind. Could it be possible that it was her love himself? But this bright hope arose but to die; for when Lingsam began to question about her future husband her mother answered proudly,—

“The fame of your beauty must have got abroad,

for he who seeks you as his bride is one of the wealthiest and leading merchants of our city, and far beyond your father in position, and therefore we did not like to refuse him for you. We were rather disappointed though, because, as we have no sons," and she sighed, "your father and I thought of adopting some one and of marrying you to him. The stars were all in favour of this marriage also," she continued after a pause; "for of course the horoscopes have been carefully examined. Your father says your future husband is very clever, and you know you like clever people—at least you have always said so."

"Yes," said Lingsam in a low tone.—"I know I shall hate this horrid, clever old man," she thought.

Her mother was utterly puzzled by the blank look that came over her daughter's face, for she had no clue to the thoughts in her mind.

"She really is a most unaccountable child," she murmured. "I wish she was more like her sister."

All things come to an end at last—the day, whether looked forward to or dreaded, ever dawns in its own good time.

Lingsam stood, on the eve before the wedding-morn, looking with a full heart at the blue, blue sea that always reminded her so of Evelyn and of that night of which she now hardly ever dared to let herself think. "The last time" is always a sad thought, and

she knew that by to-morrow her father's home would be hers no longer; that she would be amongst strangers, and away from all familiar objects. The thought of the past was overshadowed to-night by the fear of the future. The cry of her heart was, "Oh the morrow, the morrow! what misery it will bring to me!" and then the thought arose, "Why, oh why must I suffer so much? Had I not better have perished in those raging flames?"

Surely so indeed, Lingsam, were it not that as the furnace heat refineth so the heart of man is purified by sorrow, and above all by the bitter sorrow born of love. And what man, even if he could, would hold back a soul from that which cleanseth while it melts, and overcoming yet maketh enduring? for thereby the dross is removed, while the perfect ore remaineth.

Thus oppressed with fear and a presentiment of coming evil, little Lingsam wept bitterly on this her last evening beneath her parents' roof. To-morrow she knew there would be no time for weeping.

Very early next morning most of the household were astir, yet it was not till seven o'clock that Lingsam was arrayed in her gorgeous robe and ready to enter the magnificent sedan-chair (bright red, and ornamented with beautiful tiny birds' feathers, jade stone, etc.) which had been sent from the bridegroom with an extra big red card the day before. Her

mother then performed the last duty, and threw over her head the thick, heavy veil which completed the costume. She was then conducted by her assistants across the red carpet, that symbol of a wedding in China as in England, and amid the cries of her mother, which made Lingsam long to fly back and cling to her and vow that she would never, never leave her, she was lifted into her grand yet cumbersome conveyance, where, safely concealed from view and very much in the dark, she felt like a little frightened bird in a brilliant cage.

It was a very grand procession, and it drew much attention as it marched along. First went men carrying lanterns with the name of the bridegroom on them ; then two others bearing lanterns proclaiming the name of the bride ; then the friends of the bride and groom, surrounding the chair ; and then the beloved red umbrella, borne triumphantly aloft. After it came the musicians, with their, to English ears, excruciating music (Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" was not in the programme) ; and last, but not least, at any rate not in their own estimation, more men with more lanterns and crackers, hundreds of which were let off to scare away the evil spirits, as the noise they made certainly ought to have done,—that is, if evil spirits dislike noise.

It wound its way through the tortuous streets,

thrusting aside the passengers, and impeding business in a way which would, I fear, have made an average Englishman swear freely ; but the Chinese are a very easy-going people, and the shoves were taken in good part. The bystanders had a good stare meanwhile, for a wedding is a wedding all the world over, even though the bride may be invisible.

Maurice Graham was making his way as quickly as possible down the principal street in the city when he beheld the pageant advancing towards him, and knowing it would be a case of, "Get out of my way, or I'll make you," sought refuge in the nearest stall, from under which hospitable roof he watched as the glittering display passed by.

"Poor child!" he thought as he looked with interest at the bright bridal chair, and pictured the sad little inmate shut up therein. Then as soon as possible he pursued his onward way, for he knew that the case he was going to attend was a very urgent one.

He smiled sadly as he walked along thinking of another wedding in a sweet country church at home—a church connected in his mind with happy childish days and those "thoughts of youth which are long, long thoughts," as the poet sings, and with noble resolutions nobly kept; for only by that morning's mail he had received a detailed account from his sister of Evelyn's wedding, and the Chinese marriage pro-

cession he had just witnessed reminded him of his letter.

Lingsam within her gilded prison was quaking and cowering, frightened by the noise and darkness and almost stifled by her thick veil. She knew by the stopping of her chair when the ceremony of receiving the bride took place—that is, when about half-way the bridal chair was solemnly presented to the bridegroom's friends. Then the bride's cards were turned round, and her relations left her and returned to their home. Poor child! she felt more desolate and dreary than ever as the chair moved on once more in the newly-formed procession.

At last, after what seemed to her an interminable time, they stopped at the door of her future abode, and she, helped by her assistants, alighted, being welcomed by a fine-looking young matron hired for the occasion and a young boy with a mirror in his hand.

Two elderly assistants instructed and helped the little bride, whom they treated as if she was an automaton, pushing her through her part; and indeed for a great deal of the time of the ceremony she was literally under their guidance, her veil being so thick that she was practically blindfolded. They held a sieve over her to keep away evil spirits as they guided her into the entrance; and then, preceded by a mar-

ried woman, who, hired for the occasion, had welcomed her at the entrance, she was led into the bridal chamber, where the bridegroom was already waiting, standing facing the bed ; but on hearing them enter he turned round eagerly, and the assistants exchanged glances of approval as they led their “little victim” up to the couch whereon “he and she” now sat down solemnly side by side, silent as any piece of Dresden china ; for this is the rule in China as decreed by that potent monarch Custom.

Lingsam knew that it was commonly said that if the husband during those few minutes manages to sit on his wife’s flowing dress he will be her master ; and as she had determined that this should never come to pass if she could help it, she managed to arrange her robe so that it would be quite impossible for him to do so, much to her own satisfaction and to the amusement of her companions.

She was very glad when another move was made, even though she had new shoes on ; for sitting thus in perfect silence made her desire to laugh or else to scream, and then what would her husband think of her ? The same strict silence was preserved as they all moved slowly into another room where, upon what is called the “temple table,” stood two candlesticks with long lighted candles in them, a vessel with incense in it, some sugar in a bowl, some dried fruit, a pair of

shears, chop-sticks, and money, scales, and two goblets tied with red thread. Before this table the young couple knelt four times, then rising reversed the order and knelt again four times, this being not unlike one of the figures in the lancers. Then after several more prostrations before some tablets in the room (Lingsam was by this time rising and kneeling almost mechanically, and without any idea of the why and wherefore), they knelt lastly facing each other; then rose, silent still, and waited until the foremost assistant, filling the goblets with wine, gave first one goblet to the bridegroom and one to the bride, and then exchanged them. Afterwards they partook of the fruits, cane, etc., all of which have a symbolic meaning. Next Lingsam felt her veil moved gently by the pair of chop-sticks —the bridegroom's privilege; and then, to her great joy, they returned to the bridal chamber, when he departed and left her alone with her assistants.

"Oh, I'm so glad he has gone!" exclaimed Lingsam as her companions took off her veil and began to dress her for the feast; "it was awful that silence. I felt I must speak."

"You are such a little chatterbox," said one of them.

"He did not sit on my dress though. I would not let him. Is he very ugly?"

They both smiled, and one said, "You are to be

much congratulated." But she only shook her head and sighed.

"I know I shall not like him just because every one else does," Lingsam remarked censoriously.

"Come and see for yourself then; you are ready," answered one of her companions. So with a quaking heart, for a sudden fear had seized upon her that perhaps *he* might take a dislike to her, she was led trembling into the room where the bridegroom awaited her, and lifting up her dark shy eyes found herself face to face with Hsi Ting-Chang!

He gave her one quick glance, in which admiration, recognition, and pleasure were intermingled; then with a gesture to her implying silence as to her previous knowledge of him, he placed himself and her at the bridal feast. Lingsam quite understood, and behaved with the utmost decorum, conscious that, as it seemed to her, scores of eyes were upon her. She waited, however, so assiduously on him that one of the watchers observed scornfully that it would be well if she always continued as she had begun. But her heart felt light indeed and her pulse throbbed with joy, all the more intense from her previous depression.

"If you love me tell me so, but don't kick me under the table," the young English lady is said to have remarked to her nervous lover who showed his affection in this ungallant manner; but even she

would have excused Chang when, under these trying circumstances, he contrived to give Lingsam a gentle little touch with his foot, and have forgiven her Chinese sister for not resenting the indignity.

Food was placed before her, but of course she did not eat, for that would have been contrary to all rule, though outraged Nature longed for some of the tempting viands. Still it was bliss to her to watch Chang, who, more than satisfied, having come to the conclusion that his brightest dreams were amply fulfilled, and that his bride was fairer and more charming than even he had expected, was enjoying himself thoroughly.

After the dinner—dinner only in name to poor Lingsam—Chang rose, and as it had been decided that the wedding ceremony should take only one day, the two assistants who had never left Lingsam's side, preceded by the same married woman afore-mentioned, conducted them to a large chamber at the other side of the house, there to perform the rite of parent-worship.

Seated on chairs were two ladies, Nancho and her mother, each with a tablet beside her representing the dead husbands, and also an uncle and aunt of Chang's, by his mother's side.

Before them, in turn, the young couple prostrated themselves, touching the ground with their foreheads.

Lingsam was very awe-struck, and her new joy seemed to vanish as she beheld the old lady, and worse still, the fine, noble-looking but stern face of her mother-in-law, to whom this day of her son's marriage had proved a severe trial, for Nancho dreaded much the advent of the young bride. Her heart relaxed, however, as she noticed the quiet, gentle manner of the girl and the tremble of the little lips, which was, however, bravely suppressed. It reminded her of a day, now but a reminiscence of the past, when she, a lonely bride, had stood trembling before her husband's mother, before whom these children, as she called them in her mind, were now presenting themselves humbly; and she felt moved to pity, for a "fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."

Thus it was with no ungentle hand that she placed the ornaments, her present to the bride, in the dark tresses of Lingsam's stiffly arranged hair as they knelt next to her; and she was rewarded by an eager, grateful look as the girl turned, obedient to the directions of her assistants, to prostrate herself before the uncle and aunt, the former of whom looked benignly approving, struck by her, to his ideas, uncommon beauty; but the aunt sniffed, for, alas! ever since the Flood women have been jealous of those better looking than themselves. But the duties of the day were not over yet.

Lingsam was conducted into a large room facing a small courtyard, the curtains of which were drawn back, and soon both the yard and room were filled with curious guests, who freely criticised her appearance and demeanour, talking in loud tones as if she was incapable of hearing or seeing or speaking, or, worse still, of feeling.

“Pretty,” quoth one.

“Very forward-looking,” said another, who was very much annoyed that it was not her daughter who stood in Lingsam’s place.

“Very long nails,” said a third approvingly; “but Francho’s family is good, especially on his wife’s side.”

“She is very like her mother,” added one old lady who remembered when Mrs. Li stood in just such an uncomfortable position, having been one of the guests at her marriage.

“Ah, one knows who rules in Francho’s household,” said another; for people love to gossip of their neighbours in whatever quarter of the globe they may dwell.

“Francho is fearfully weak,” answered some one.

“Ah, poor little one! really she is very beautiful,” remarked a young married woman in a patronizing tone. “I expect,” she continued, “she will not have a pleasant time of it with that mother-in-law of hers. She always seems so stern, so uncompromising.”

“ How she adores her son ! ” said the first speaker.

Lingsam felt utterly indignant, especially at the words about her mother ; but she had been schooled before that she was not on any account to speak or act as if she heard ; and the thought of Chang, and the desire not to disgrace herself before his friends, made her keep in by a great effort her righteous anger.

“ If my mother-in-law will be hard on me, that horrid woman need not have said so,” she thought.

Lingsam longed passionately for the time to come when she would be alone with Chang, and discover if it was fate alone which had thus brought them together. But for that one glance, he had acted throughout as if he had not known her, and her weary, overstrung mind began to tempt her with the idea that perhaps she had been mistaken as to his gesture ; but then she remembered that gentle kick.

Hoping against hope, she looked round about for Chang, although she knew it would be most unlikely for him to be present ; and so doing her eye rested on Nancho as she moved about among her friends and neighbours with all her calm dignity of demeanour.

“ How like she is to Chang ! ” she thought before she grasped the fact that she on whom she was now gazing was his mother. Nancho caught the look as she made her way towards that end of the room, dispersing thereby the gossiping crowd around, though

only for their places to be filled by new-comers, each with their individual criticisms.

“She has very small feet,” said one.

Those said little feet, crushed into new shoes that morning and stood upon that long day so much more than usual, were aching terribly ; in fact, so great was the pain in them that the physical gradually overcame the mental suffering, and the tiredness of her poor little body rendered her hardly conscious after a while of the remarks, favourable or unfavourable, that passed around her.

The excessively rude stare, however, of a young man about Chang’s age, handsome but with a cruel, hard expression of countenance, aroused her to a consciousness of her surroundings, and created a passionate desire on her part to hide her face in her hands. But this might not be, she knew ; she must bear all, suffer all.

“Confucius ! she is lovely. My cousin has a fine catch here,” thought the stranger. “A little Tartar,” he said aloud as she shot out of her brilliant eyes an indignant glance of scorn as he drew a little nearer her with a harsh laugh. She could have cried with anger, only pride came to her rescue.

The room was now fast emptying, as it was getting very late, but a few young fellows lingered still, headed by the new-comer.

"I hate him," she said to herself; "he makes me shiver all over."

But at length she saw the last pigtail disappear, and was almost carried by her assistants back to the gorgeously decorated bridal chamber, where they left her alone until Chang joined her, and in another minute she felt again the well-remembered pressure of his lips as he embraced her rapturously.

Had he not waited a long year for that kiss? So he did it again, remembering Tom's example; and she clung to him, happy beyond description—fatigue, sorrow, pain, all forgotten as she realized the blissful fact that he whom she so admired and loved returned her affection, and that at last they were together again.

"Nothing shall part us now," he said softly.

As soon as he released her from his embrace, Lingsam fell at his feet and promised to be ever his faithful and devoted wife.

"I thought," she whispered as he raised her, "it was going to be some horrid old man, and it was you after all."

"Are you glad?" he replied.

"Glad! why, I have thought of no one but you ever since I saw you. You are my hero," which confession, so naively given, delighted Chang.

Then after a short pause he said,—

"I am very glad you behaved so well to-day, and did not show any sign of having seen me before. It would never have done to have betrayed our secret. People would be horrified."

"Oh, what a long, strange, miserable yet happy day it has been!" said Lingsam. "I thought it was never going to come to an end. What a dreadful time those men stayed!"

"Yes," said Chang, and thought of how he had been obliged to bribe them to depart even then by a handsome *douceur*.

"Do you not think," said Lingsam with a sigh of bliss, "that we are the two happiest people in China?"

Chang heartily agreed.

"And to think," thought she, "I kicked and screamed and cried because I was to be married, and it was to him all the time! How little we know what is best for us! I will wait and see first another time."

Surely a very wise resolve!

CHAPTER V.

Home.

“ ‘Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come.”

BYRON.

“ Eyebrows shaped like leaves of willows,
Drooping over ‘autumn billows ;’
Almond-shaped, of liquid brightness,
Were the eyes of Yang-kuei-fei.”

Ballad translated from Chinese.

“ **W**ELL, Chang, you look as if marriage agreed with you.”

The speaker was the same young fellow to whom Lingsam had taken so great a dislike, and who was walking by Chang’s side, the two young men having met at a kite-flying match given by one of the city “magnates” of Sin-tau, and from which they were now returning together. Both young men carried caged birds in their hands, one a lark and the other a canary.

They were both much the same age, but were singularly unlike, for Chinamen, and in appearance

and also in thought and in character were exact opposites.

Two or three years before this time Ma-i Lao had left his own city and gone to reside in Canton, and he had but lately returned to Sin-tau, not, at least so said his neighbours, particularly improved by his wider knowledge of life and his experiences in that capital, which is noted for its corrupting influence upon the youth of China.

Chang quite concurred in the general opinion as regarded his cousin ; but his relationship with the family, and the fact that as boys they had been very close companions, would have made it impossible for him to have dropped the old intimacy entirely, even had he wished to do so. This was not the case either, for though he instinctively felt that Lao's society was lowering in its influence, and his finer mind was often jarred by his cousin's flippant and coarse conversation, still he found him clever and amusing, and was attracted by his superior knowledge of the world and by his gay, racy stories, often gross exaggerations, of life in the southern capital.

"I am very happy," said Chang in reply to Lao's remark, and received for answer in a cynical tone,—

"She is awfully lovely, but a little fury, I should imagine. However, I daresay you will be able to keep her in order."

Chang flushed up, for this speech did not please him.

Just then they came to a jeweller's bazaar, or rather stall, whereon might be seen arranged many a lovely piece of jade stone and beauteous inlaid ornaments, and those dazzling jewels which go to make such a shop so interesting and fascinating in an Oriental town. Therein sat the jeweller hard at work.

Chang paused and invested in some handsome articles.

"Not for yourself then," said Lao as he noted his cousin's choice.

"No," answered Chang mechanically as he counted out "cash" after "cash."

When they had proceeded on their way, Lao could not keep his opinion to himself any longer.

"You must have more money than brains," he said, "to buy such costly presents for your new toy. Take my advice, and don't spoil her, or you will find your hands pretty full, I can assure you."

"From whence is your knowledge of married life derived, seeing you are not wed?" said Chang, trying to speak chaffingly, but feeling much ruffled and resenting his cousin's interference. "You must follow my august example," he added after a moment's rather awkward silence. Lao saw he was annoyed.

"I will then, if you undertake to procure me a

bride as beautiful as yours," he answered with ready tact, seeing the bent of Chang's mind, and wishing to conciliate him, for he was most anxious to keep on good terms with his respected and influential cousin.

He succeeded, for Chang's face flushed with pleasure at this little speech, and he willingly agreed when a little later Lao proposed that they should get a cup of tea together at one of the large tea-houses so abundant in the city.

The waiters came forward servilely to wait on their honoured customers, and soon the light-coloured beverage was placed steaming before them in tiny cups (no milk or sugar), and they sipped it with evident enjoyment as they chatted together, discussing the world in general and Chinese polities in particular.

"I must say I approve of the position taken by our Government with regard to foreigners; also of their wisdom in having so much gunpowder sent over from England. When next we go to war we shall be able to meet those white-faced fellows on their own ground. Also trade with them means money to us; and I think the country ought to be opened up to them more and more," said Lao.

"We must be careful," said Chang.

"Nonsense! why, this sleepy old city might make its fortune if only a breakwater was built out yonder,

so as to make a secure harbour, instead of, as now, everything being obliged to be sent out in the junks and be again transferred into the ships. We could export and import direct then. It would not cost much money," said Lao, eagerly pouring out his borrowed, not original, ideas, all very new to Chang. "And then," he continued, "I believe that in some parts of England you can almost pick up the coal, and it costs a mere song. Freight is never expensive, especially if there is no transfer of cargo, and here it could be sold for its weight in gold."

"Not for quite so much as that," said Chang *sotto voce*.

"Better still, I believe there is plenty of coal all round Tawtoi-way, if only any one was enterprising enough to commence mining operations there. If only I had capital like you have, I would have been a made man."

"You had capital too, you know, once," said Chang quietly.

Lao winced, and did not love his cousin any the better for that quiet reminder, for there are some things one would rather forget.

Lao's father had been killed during the rebellion against the emperor by the Taptists, and his mother, Nancho's sister-in-law, had died at his birth. He had been brought up by his grandfather in a very strict

way, until at a good old age he too had paid the debt of nature some few years ago, leaving most of his money to Lao, who had wasted it in "riotous living" and in wild speculations in Canton. Indeed it was only want of capital that had brought him back to his native city, and caused him to consent to settle down for a while to the irksome duties of his uncle's office. Chang instead had, on reaching man's estate, invested most of his father's money in a partnership with a very influential merchant, who had died lately and had left him the sole possessor of a very prosperous business, which was rapidly developing under his careful management into one of the largest in the city.

"I do not understand," continued Chang, "what you mean by a breakwater in the sea;" and then looking out at the ocean and seeing the long line of surf caused by the heavy waves, he added, "Nature never meant Sin-tau for a sea-port town. No ship could ever ride at anchor here. It is much too rough."

"Let art do what nature has left undone," replied Lao promptly, "and throw out a stone wall into the sea."

"Build into the sea! You must be wild to think of such an idea."

"But it could be done easily," said the other, angry at his cousin's incredulity; "it would not be nearly so

difficult to make as a bridge. "Why," continued Lao, "I had it on good authority in the capital that in England they build out long stone or wooden walls just to walk on."

"Indeed!" said Chang. "I always heard that England was a very small island; but surely they have a *few* streets to walk in. You must have heard and seen many curious things in Canton," continued he.

"Yes, indeed. When I was in Canton," went on Lao, "I remember going all over an American ship."

"Yes?" said Chang inquiringly.

"And they had on board a most curious contrivance by which, when you touched a little button, a bright light lit up the whole ship all at once."

"Were you startled?"

"Yes; but not nearly so much so as when, just as I was going to leave, there was heard a great yell—squeak rather—quite supernatural in its weirdness. How I jumped!" But he did not add, "How the other men laughed at me!" though he might have done so with truth.

"What caused it?" asked Chang.

Lao had no more idea than his cousin, as he had been a great deal too frightened to ask, but he was determined not to appear ignorant, so invented freely.

"It was caused," he said slowly—"it was caused by a pig."

"A pig!"

"Yes; it was a sacrifice to their gods, and they were roasting it alive, and it squeaked."

"Gods! I thought the English worshipped only one god."

"God or gods, it does not signify."

"And a pig! surely that was an extraordinary animal to offer up for sacrifice. Did you see it?"

"I heard it—that was enough. No other animal could have made such an unearthly noise. I am quite positive it was a pig," said Lao, in a most determined "stick-to-that" tone.

A smothered sound of laughter was heard proceeding from the occupant of the next table, and looking round they beheld Maurice Graham seated there convulsed with merriment. He had turned into the tea-shop for some tea, creating quite a little sensation therein; but the young companions were so engaged in conversation that he had passed by them unnoticed, and had taken the table next to them, where he had unwittingly overheard the latter part of their conversation.

"I wonder why Englishmen are always laughing," remarked staid Chang, not, however, thinking so much of Maurice as of merry Tom. "They are," he

continued solemnly, “a most curious nation,”—which, by the way, did not tend to cure Maurice’s upset risible faculties. He tried, though, to look as if he was not laughing at them.

“Who is he?” asked Lao, lowering his voice, feeling he was being laughed at, partly divining the cause, and taking an instant aversion to Maurice. “Do you know him?” sincerely hoping he did not.

“He is the young Englishman at the opium refuge. I only know him by sight. He does a good work there, I believe.”

Maurice wished he might speak to Chang, whom he both admired and liked; but etiquette, that most miserable of unrealities, with its bobbings and bowings, a hydra-headed monster in Chinese social life, absolutely forbade him. He rose almost immediately.

“It was self-sacrificing at least of him to leave his own country,” continued Chang.

There was a slight scornfulness in his tone; he did not think evidently he need have done so.

“He had much better have remained there,” remarked Lao, still angry at the ridicule. “You may be sure he gets well paid for coming here. Whatever the English may protest with regard to religion, I say their god is gold.”

“Yes,” responded Chang, “or else the opium trade with India would have been suppressed long ago.

Certainly first of all to sell the vicious drug which ruins so many of our countrymen, and then to send men to cure them, seems a strange idea. Just like those foreigners. My mother hates them."

"Well, really, opium is a good thing," said Lao—"taken in moderation, I mean of course," seeing his cousin's look of horror. "I occasionally smoke a little pipeful myself. It is quite fashionable to do so, I assure you."

"Then I had rather not be in the fashion," said Chang dryly. "Poor mother! she has a perfect horror of it."

"Always mother, mother! I should be ashamed to be tied to my mother's apron-strings," or rather Lao quoted a Chinese proverb to the same effect.

"I am not!" flared up Chang, for he much disliked the imputation.

"Don't be peppery," Lao remarked sneeringly; then continued, as he calmly killed an insect which had settled on the table, "I hope, in one of my many transmigrations of soul, I may some day be a mosquito. Should I not be revenged on some people! What a life I would lead them!"

Chang, looking into his face, beheld on it an expression of harshness and cruelty which made him shudder.

"I pity any man in your power," he thought. He

was much scandalized, too, at the last flippant speech, and rose, saying coldly,—

“I cannot be staying here all day.”

“Have you ever heard of a railway?” asked Lao as they continued their way.

“No; another foreign innovation?” said Chang.

This gave Lao a chance of discoursing on a theme of which he knew nothing, but of which his companion knew less than nothing, and was therefore easily “greened,” as Tom Towers would have emphatically described it. So he beguiled the way with a very learned discourse—if only most of the facts had been correct, which they were not—on railways, the need of them, and the revolution that the use of them would cause in conservative China.

The feeling of depression and discontent which had been growing on Chang during his long conversation with Lao, lifted as he entered his own home and made his way at once to the women’s apartments.

Nancho was one of the exceptional mothers-in-law which go to prove the rule, and little Lingsam soon learned to love her dearly. Her love for her son had constrained her to win for him the choice of his heart, though hers had often sunk at the thought that when the bride came the mother would be second to the wife in reality, even if he did not show it in his manner. “Of course he will be good and respectful

to me ; he has been too well brought up to be otherwise," she thought, but with a jealous pang at the bare idea "he will love *her* best." She could not but see how deeply enraptured he was with this young girl; and the temptation was often strong upon her to insist on his marrying some other woman, some one whom he would loathe instead of adore, so that she might still reign first in his heart—or at any rate not behold the rival of that domain. She knew that if she strongly opposed the match Chang could not have his desire or win his coveted treasure, and she also knew that the power of custom was too strong for him to dare to complain, even if he thought of doing so.

But her love for Chang and her great desire for his happiness conquered ; for how could she grieve the son she loved ? No ! he should have his wish and marry the coarse, flighty girl he had set his mind on (she always pictured her daughter-in-law-to-be as a coarse, vulgar, though beautiful woman), and she would hide away her feelings and let them forget her as long as he was happy. Thus she had thought.

She had been favourably struck with the childish grace of Lingsam on the wedding-day, and had admired the look of indignation she had cast upon Lao, whom Nancho did not like.

Therefore when, the next morning, Chang had

brought his young bride to her and said that his happiness would never be quite complete without her sympathy, and Lingsam, with a sweet, shy look on her fair face, had whisperingly asked her if she might love her for Chang's sake, she had with a very good grace blessed the young girl and promised to be a kind mother to her. And when a little later Lingsam had sat between them very happily, one hand in Chang's grasp, the other on Nancho's knee, she knew that the bond of union was complete, and that her unselfish love had found its reward.

Day by day the ties between her and her little daughter-in-law became nearer and dearer. Chang had, especially of late, been of necessity away from home a great deal of the day, and even when he was in the house, the social ideas of China prevented Nancho from seeing much of him; and as he had grown older, he had been engrossed by cares and occupations in which she could take no part, for was she not only a woman?

Chang's grandmother, too, was growing old and getting very deaf; and though they had always been fair friends, the two had but little in common, the elder lady never having been able to understand the depth and power of the younger one's nature, being herself always remarkably dull even in a land noted for dull women. And thus Nancho was often very

lonely, and the coming of bright little Lingsam into that quiet household was a welcome change.

Lingsam, such is the power of love, was developing into a sweet, bright, contented woman.

It was delightful to Nancho to have a companion to listen to her tales of her early married life and of her father's home, and to whom to relate her reminiscences of the babyhood and boyhood of her son ; and of this subject Lingsam never seemed to tire, nor could the stories be repeated often enough to please her. It was pleasant to agree with Lingsam when she praised her husband and said how good and noble and handsome he was ; and though she used to scold the little flatterer when very often she ended with her favourite remark, " He says it is all due to you ; you have been such a good mother to him," yet she loved to hear her make the little speech all the same. And if ever it was necessary to correct Lingsam, she was dutiful and submissive at once ; for would not Chang be sorry if she was naughty ? and her whole desire in life was to please him she loved.

Lingsam was sitting at Nancho's feet when Chang entered the room.

" Chang," she exclaimed, rising, as custom dictated. " mother and I have been talking of you."

" What have you been saying ? anything bad ? " he responded.

"We have come to the conclusion that you are the very best man in all Sin-tau," she answered naively.

"Do you ever come to any other conclusion?" he asked.

"But you see it is the right one, so we cannot help coming to it," she said argumentatively.

"How do you know that? How many men do you know in the city? My cousin Lao would not agree with you at all; he considers himself far superior to me."

"Horrid man!" said Lingsam; "I am sure he is not."

"I do not like what I hear about Lao," said Nancho anxiously. "Do not be intimate with him, Chang."

"No fear, mother. I do not care for him myself, though he is amusing to talk to; but we have an art of vexing each other somehow. I certainly shall not seek his society.—See what is in this parcel," said he, turning to Lingsam.

"Oh how lovely!" she exclaimed, as on opening it a bracelet of beautiful silver workmanship made its appearance. "But have you not got something for mother also?" she added.

"What a hurry you are always in!" answered Chang, as he placed a small finely-carved fan in his mother's hand.

"My boy, you will ruin yourself buying presents for us both," she said; but she was very pleased nevertheless to be remembered. No one likes being left out in the cold.

"No fear, mother," he replied as he left them, to go to his own apartments.

Later on in the evening Chang sat very contentedly sipping his tea and talking to his mother; Lingsam near by as usual, and watching every movement of her husband with loving devotion. Chang not having any brothers or male relatives in the house, was naturally thrown more than most men on the society of his womenkind.

"Lingsam," he said, suddenly addressing her, "how would you like to travel in a carriage drawn by a horse that puffs and blows" ("What a funny horse!" interposed Lingsam), "and goes so fast you cannot see anything as you rush by?"

"I should be so frightened; but you would go also, would you not?"

"Oh, I have no idea of going in one, or letting you go in one either; but Lao was telling me that they have such things in England."

"I am very glad that I am not in England," said Lingsam with decision. "Surely they must be always having accidents with them. Just think, even with our sedan-chairs we are always knocking up against

each other, and it must be more dangerous when they go so fast. I hope my English lady has not been in one and been killed."

"I expect only mandarins and grand people go in them, and of course no ladies; but I must find out more about these things," said Chang, for he had felt ashamed of his ignorance when Lao had appeared to know so much. "I saw Mr. Graham to-day," he continued; "he is the gentleman whom I saw with your English lady the day after the fire."

"Is he that horrid man who laughed so and offered to carry me?"

"My dear!" came from the horrified Nancho.

"But I would not let him," said Lingsam. "Of course not, mother," remembering with pride how courageous she had been.

"No, that was not Mr. Graham," said Chang; "he is dark-haired, and he lives here altogether."

"Why?" asked Nancho.

"He has charge of the opium refuge opened a year or two ago. He is called very devoted; but Lao says he believes he is well paid, else he would never come here. But English people will do anything for money."

"But, Chang," said Lingsam musingly, "my lady cannot have two husbands!"

"Oh no," answered Chang; "I believe that she was

not married. I heard she was the niece of the consul at Hankao, and lived with him generally."

"Alone?" asked Nancho.

"Yes; his wife died last year. He has gone home now for good, I hear, and a new one has been appointed in his place."

"My lady not married!" said Lingsam. "Fancy his behaving like that to her and he not her husband, and neither of them the least bit ashamed."

Surely it was a case of the pot calling the kettle names.

"It was dreadful," said Nancho severely. "You ought to be ashamed of referring to it."

Lingsam looked crestfallen, and Chang made a remark on the first subject that entered into his head, being unable to bring the weather, that unfailing stop-gap for uncomfortable pauses in English homes, to his aid.

But when they were alone Lingsam said to Chang she did so long to know if her lady (for so she always designated Evelyn) was married; could he not find out?

"I will try," Chang answered. "If ever I meet Maurice Graham I will ask him. I may do so, for he goes sometimes to Fan-tan's house. I fear," he added solemnly, "that Fan-tan is getting imbued with his strange doctrines."

"Are they very strange?" asked Lingsam.

"Yes, indeed—most peculiar," answered Chang, who knew nothing about them except from hearsay.

A few days after this conversation Maurice Graham sat writing to his cousin Evelyn.

"You will be pleased to hear," he wrote, "that Hsi Chang has married Francho's daughter, so your Chinese love story has ended in the orthodox manner: 'They married, and lived happily ever after'—at least I trust they may. The stars seem to have been in their favour, for my informant added that the astrologers predicted an exceptionally happy union. As to my work here," the letter continued, "in which I know I have your sympathy, progress is slow, and it seems like dragging one or two out of the mire while hundreds are sinking deeper and deeper into it; but I must trust and be patient. I am myself very well, though the glare of the sun tries my eyes; which must be my excuse for such bad writing. As regards your promised sketch, I should like to have one very much; and please let it be a soft, shady scene, with lots of clouds about. Do write again; letters are such a treat when away from England, as you know, and I have not many correspondents now. You will have Tom back again before you get this. What a glad home-coming it will be! Tell him from me that his beloved Celestials are dirtier than ever,

and still speak the same crack-jaw language. I often wish I had not got a nose as I walk the streets here, as you used to say when you were in this inodorous country. I long for a sniff of an English hay-field. Good-night, for it is getting very late.—Ever your affectionate cousin,

MAURICE.”

“ Poor, old, fastidious Maurice ! ” said Tom, who was sitting, a month later, cosily in his easy-chair in the tiny but artistic drawing-room of his pretty little home, Evelyn sitting close beside him as she read aloud this letter from her cousin.

“ I must really paint him something,” she said. “ He is not fit for the terrible strain of the life he is leading, and that wretched climate ; I do not wonder his sister frets about him. And he might have done so well in England, and have made his name by this time,” she added.

“ He is a noble fellow,” said Tom warmly, “ and his work must tell in time ; but it must be terribly against the grain sometimes. God bless him in it ! ” Tom was serious enough now, for he admired Maurice immensely.

“ I remember,” said Evelyn, “ how, when we were all children together at home, he would never do anything he did not like ; he always left what he called ‘ dirty work ’ to my brother Charles. But he is very

different from those old days." And as memory compared the self-concentrated, conceited, proud Maurice of that time with the earnest, unselfish worker she had known and honoured in China, she felt that the change was indeed wonderful.

"I am glad my pet romance," she continued, "has ended so well. I had an inner conviction those two would marry."

"I wonder how many more kisses he has had," said Tom.

"That was all your fault, showing him the way," said Evelyn coquettishly.

"I would show him again if he were here," giving her a hearty smacking embrace.

"I think, Tom," said Evelyn roguishly, "that you ought to leave off such bad habits now you are growing older. Some one is coming; let me go," she added, for he had his arm round her waist. The some one was only the servant bringing in afternoon tea, and who wisely appeared not to notice her mistress's embarrassment.

"Here's to the health of Mr. and Mrs. Heathen Chinee," said Tom, drinking off his cupful of tea at a draught, and passing the cup back to be refilled. "I wish him joy of his ugly wife," he added.

"May they be as happy as we are," said Evelyn, as she took up the tea-pot. "They could not be happier."

"Hear, hear!" cried Tom, so loudly that the large dog lying on the hearthrug was roused from sleep, and, hearing his master's voice, bethought himself of showing his satisfaction by wagging his great tail, adding thereby to the uproar.

Evelyn's wish was fulfilled for her Chinese lovers. Lingsam was indeed a happy little woman; for did not Chang love her dearly, and had she not the kindest of mothers-in-law? She almost adored Chang, who was amused and pleased at her loving devotion to him; indeed he stood in danger of being spoilt in his home, only having been accustomed from babyhood to the admiration of his womenkind, it came naturally to him, and he took it all gladly indeed, but without thinking much about it.

He was also a great favourite in the city, and was very prosperous, for many who knew his father and uncle took much interest in the fatherless youth; and as prosperity ever begets friends, as adversity in most cases winnows them, he came to be much sought after, and was, as Lao—who was still in the city, his schemes never having developed into substantialities—used to remark, "a very fortunate young man."

CHAPTER VI.

Baby.

“Better fifty years in Europe
Than a cycle in Cathay.”

TENNYSON.

A NOTHER year has passed by, as years have a habit of doing. Whether the days be bright and sunny, filled with happiness and love, or whether they are loaded with sorrow and heavy with grief and pain, they come and go, morning after night, morrow after morrow, with unrelenting regularity, until the earth has made the circle of the sun, and the three hundred and sixty-five days have passed away, and men and women are a whole year older, whether they acknowledge it or not.

Lingsam is happier even than last year ; for another blessing has been added to her abundant store, and on the happily cared-for daughter-in-law and beloved wife has been bestowed the crowning joy of motherhood, and she now holds in her arms—what fitter burden could they bear ?—a bonny baby boy. Very

sweet is the expression on her young face—at least so Chang thinks as he watches the mother and child one morning, lingering to gaze on his new treasure before going out into the noisy street.

Lingsam looks older and more serious—as indeed she feels, for the little life which has been intrusted to her has opened up thoughts and feelings in her mind that she had never wist of before the delightful but solemn duties of motherhood had come to her.

No English matron bending over her babe's cot, dreaming of the fame which he should some day attain, the noble work he should accomplish—if all the infants whose mothers prophesied during their cradle days that they would be Lord Chancellor had risen to that august if sleepy dignity, there would never have been enough cloth in the kingdom to dress the woolsacks with)—could have rivalled Lingsam's day-dreams, which had begun again, but now only on behalf of her beautiful boy.

"What are you thinking of so gravely?" asked Chang, coming up close behind her.

"Of baby's future, and I was wondering if I should live to be very old and see his son's sons. I hope I shall. Is he not a fine boy?" she added, looking proudly at the child and then up into her husband's face.

"Hush! you must not say that, for fear of the evil

spirits, you know," said Chang. "They might hear you."

Lingsam held her child closer, shuddering.

"I hope," she said impulsively, "that he may grow up to be just like you." (Surely the sweetest words a wife can say to the father of her child). "I thought you were gone out," she added.

"The chair is at the door, but I had to return for a final peep of you and baby. Take care of the boy," and he was gone, really gone, this time.

Lingsam's mother-in-law soon rejoined her, and the hours passed quickly by. There was baby to be looked after and played with, though he was a very solemn child compared with English babies. Then there were the things from the bazaars to be examined, and new dresses to be discussed. There was not much variety in these though, when they were all made in the same pattern—loose, skirt-like garments—and practically confined to the two usual women's colours, pink and green. There were also her pretty ornaments, of which she had many, to be taken out and admired.

Then there was her almost daily airing in the garden to be taken. That said garden was "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever," filled as it was with sweet-smelling shrubs and trees—sometimes left to nature's tender guidance, but oftentimes quaintly transformed

into peculiar shapes by the art of man—lovely quiet nooks and tiny arbours hidden away, and artificial water crossed by a queer pointed bridge, similar to the one portrayed on the blue willow-pattern plates of yore, and beds of gorgeous flowers, an unfailing source of interest to Lingsam, who was an ardent botanist, as was also Chang.

And every day was there not a new charm to be found in her darling baby, and most days some slight excitement, some accident, or some servile misde-meanour, to break the monotony of the long hours? Occasionally, too, did she not—these were always red-letter days—go out in a sedan-chair to one of the temples to worship? And then last, but not least, was there not always that serious question to be decided, “What should Chang have for dinner?” Then Lingsam was a clever little embroiderer; and what more could she want than to sit and work and think about Chang?

So little Lingsam was very happy as honoured wife and loving mother, although an English young lady would have voted her life “unutterably dull!”

“What, not one meeting!” cries one; “not a single class to take, nor a new preacher to hear, nor any society of which to become secretary! Unbearable!”

“Never,” exclaims another, “to go to a ball or a dance, or play tennis all afternoon, or look through a

new novel, or, above all, to have a jolly ride across country after the hounds ! Too, too awful !”

“ What,” says number three, “ no scientific lecture, no essay club, no antiquarian excursion—whatever looks at the ruins though ?—on half-holidays ! No argument as to Shakespeare *versus* Bacon ; and no hope, however far in the future, of visiting the lands of romantic Italy or classic Greece ! Poor thing ! not two thoughts in her head. How I pity her !”

No need to do so, though, for Lingsam has never tasted of your streams of bliss, Miss Energy, Miss Lively, Miss Clever, so knows not her loss, and is quite happy and contented.

Nancho was much delighted at her promotion to the rank of grandmother, and very devoted to the “ little stranger,” though she would never allow he was so fine a child as his father had been ; and Lingsam was quite ready to yield this point, both as she had never beheld that most remarkable of babies, and also because she thought that from what Chang had grown up to be he must have been quite an “ extra special” one.

That same morning Maurice Graham received the promised sketch from Evelyn, with apologies for not having sent it before ; and she wrote, “ I have been, as I daresay you have heard, very ill ; but I am quite well now, and so happy, for Tom is with me again.”

Enclosed in his parcel was a small packet for Lingsam, which Maurice sent at once to Chang, with a civil little note explaining how it had come from England under cover to him.

"Lingsam," said Chang to his little wife as he entered the room with the packet in his hand, "the English lady has not forgotten you."

"Has she sent me a present?" cried Lingsam excitedly.

"Yes. I opened it to see what was in it." (Never doubted he for a minute his right of so doing.) "See," he continued, "she has sent you a picture of herself, a pair of steel scissors in a case, a funny-looking mouse, and a book for me about England."

"How delightful! what perfect treasures!" Lingsam cried as she examined the scissors; but her enchantment knew no bounds when Chang, who had been practising winding it up in his own room, set the little toy mouse in motion. "How nicely he runs! I love the dear little thing.—Come and look, mother," as Nancho entered the room.

"Is it alive?" asked she, much startled, for she had not, like Lingsam, seen it before it was set in motion.

"No," said Chang. "Is it not wonderful? I can't make it out."

Nancho shook her head doubtfully, as if she thought it was bewitched.

“Take care, Chang,” said she.

Altogether Tom would have been delighted had he witnessed the sensation the toy made, for he had insisted on sending it.

“Such stupid trumpery to send to a married woman,” Evelyn had expostulated.

“Nonsense!” he had replied; “she is but a child, and it will amuse her. I will put it in,” little realizing that it would astonish older folk as well.

There were also a few kind words in Chinese from Evelyn, saying that she hoped the little gifts she enclosed would be acceptable, telling her that she had heard of her marriage, and that she hoped she was happy. “I also,” she added, “have been married to the gentleman who was with me the night of the fire.”

“Oh, I am so glad to know that,” said Lingsam; “and I think she is very kind to remember me.—Mother, look! this is just like her. I wonder how she got on the paper.”

“How dreadfully shocking!” exclaimed Nancho, for Evelyn had inadvertently sent a photograph of herself taken in a low evening dress. It was Tom’s favourite one of her; and Evelyn, who had very beautifully shaped neck and arms, was very partial to it also.

“You must remember she is a foreigner,” remarked

Chang in excuse, for he felt grateful to Evelyn for remembering him and his little wife.

But poor Nancho was too much horrified to be easily appeased.

"Dreadful!" she murmured. "Surely she was never dressed like that when you saw her."

"Oh-no," was the answer; but Chang thought to himself that his mother would have been more scandalized still had she seen Evelyn in the tight-fitting bodice she had worn that evening, and which had made a deep impression on his mind.

Lingsam now turned to the book.

"Look, it is mostly pictures," she said; "and what funny ones, quite different from ours! They go smaller and smaller away into the distance. What are these animals?"

"Horses," said Chang; "and here are cats and pigs."

"Look, Chang," she continued, as she turned over the pages, "this must be the iron horse you once told us about."

Chang looked with much interest.

"Yes, that must be an engine," he remarked. "Does it not look a great awkward thing? And those are the carriages it drags after it.—See, mother," he added, turning to Nancho, "this is what they want to introduce into China. They go ever so quickly—ten miles an hour, I believe."

"What should we want to go so fast for?" said Nancho, as she came to look, at her son's summons.

"They say," continued Chang, for he had read a good deal about railways since his conversation with Lao, and was rather glad to air his knowledge, "that the English have dug right down under the earth, like moles do, and that they go under their city of London in those things."

"How frightened I should be!" said Lingsam.

"Really, Chang," said Nancho quite severely, as she obeyed the call of a servant to go to her mother's room, "I wonder you could for one moment believe such a ridiculous thing. I gave you credit for more sense."

Chang felt and "looked small," as schoolboys phrase it, especially as in truth he had doubted the fact himself; and how could he know that Tom Towers at that very moment was smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper in a first-class carriage on the Metropolitan Railway?

"It may be true," said little Lingsam, wishing to cheer her husband. "Foreigners are such queer people that perhaps they prefer being under the ground to walking above it as we do. I wonder," she continued, "if my lady"—looking again at the photograph—"has a baby like I have."

For one short month Evelyn had held just such a
(175) 8

beloved child in her arms ; but He who gave had recalled the tiny life, and her stainless flower, "just given, baptized, and gone," had passed into higher keeping, and in the childless mother's heart was left a great void as she mourned her baby girl.

Evelyn had in her letter asked Lingsam if she could procure her a pair of tiny shoes such as she herself wore ; and Lingsam, delighted to do something in return for her kindness, insisted on Chang sending her very best pair off at once, and took an immense interest in the packing up and directing of them. Hardly, however, was she able to persuade herself to believe that they would reach their destination safely, especially when Chang told her that they would be four or five weeks on the ocean.

"Suppose," she said, "that a very heavy storm came on. They would go down to the bottom of the sea, and then they could not reach her." Which patent fact was unanswerable.

But, spite of Lingsam's fears, Evelyn did receive them in due time, and they found a snug home in the cabinet Maurice had given her, save when they were exhibited to point a lecture on "tight boots," or to give Tom an opportunity of delivering his opinion as to this "asinine" (that was his expression) custom of Chinese women.

"Never," he would always conclude, "may I have

to walk behind one again. I would far rather walk behind a tortoise, I declare."

Lingsam received several visits after this event, not so much paid to her as to the presents, for this little affair caused quite an excitement among her relatives, glad of any change. The little mouse came in for quite an ovation, and many envied Lingsam this work of art.

Nancho's mind was, however, much upset by the whole affair. She feared the possibility of anything bringing to light the fact that Lingsam and Chang had met and spoken before their marriage; but she need not have done so, for even gay little Lingsam had her share of prudence, and who would have thought of such a thing?

Nancho also was sorry that what she thought would have been much better forgotten had been brought again vividly before her children's minds; and this feeling caused her to dislike the English more than ever, and made her prejudice against them stronger still.

Some months afterwards Chang one afternoon told his little wife the, to her, heartrending piece of news that he would be obliged to go away for two or three days on a journey, as he had an important commission to fulfil at Twa-tou.

"Oh, don't go," she sobbed bitterly. He had never

been away from her since their marriage, and to the stay-at-home Chinese ideas this little trip seemed quite an undertaking ; so Lingsam, unaccustomed to a husband who turns up and is off again like a meteor flash, thought of a journey as a most perilous proceeding, and was accordingly unnerved.

" You must not fret," said Chang tenderly. " You will have mother and the baby. Do stop crying."

" Is it a very dreadful journey ?" she asked.

" No. Nearly all the way is by water, and quite easy."

" You won't get drowned, will you ? Where are you going to ?"

" Twa-tou. It is a pretty little town, I hear, but I have never been there."

" Twa-tou ! Why, that is where my sister lives," she said, looking up with sudden interest. " Will you go and see her ?"

" I will call on her husband most certainly."

" We used to be so fond of each other before she married and went away. I remember how we cried when we knew she was going to live so far off. You know she was betrothed when quite a tiny child, and before her husband's family left Sin-tau. I wish I could see her again."

Lingsam had almost forgotten her sister in the absorbing joys of her life, until the familiar name had

recalled her vividly to her mind. With the thought of Wang-fu, Lingsam remembered also her father and mother; and then memory recalled years long ago when she and Wang-fu had been children together. The consequences of these reminiscences caused her next remark to seem to Chang rather inconsequent; for even the dearest and most intimate souls cannot know what is passing in that wonderful hiding-place the heart of man, buried, like the springs of earth, out of sight, and only to be judged by the streams which flow therefrom.

"Chang," she said, "to think that you and I were a little boy and girl in this city and did not know anything about each other. Is it not a pity we do not know what is going to happen to us, and what is now happening to others? It is so stupid wondering only. I wish, oh, I wish I had a little magic-glass, that when I looked into it I might see just what I wanted to know. If only I had one, I would say," and Lingsam laughed at her odd fancy, "Let me see first Wang-fu; and then she would appear, doing just what she is doing, most likely nursing her boy, only he must be a big child now."

"Would you not want them to speak also?" said Chang, who could not help smiling at her wild idea.

"No," answered Lingsam; "I should be quite satisfied with seeing. Let us pretend we have got

such a glass, and guess what we should see in it. I should ask to see my parents next. They are not generally together, so I must have two peeps at them, mother perhaps scolding Ning-pu—she used to scold Ning-pu dreadfully—and father having a grand dinner somewhere, and enjoying himself. Then I should ask to see what my English lady is doing, and to have a peep at England at the same time. It would be lovely. Then I should like also to be able to look into the future, and see what will be happening to me next year, and what will happen to-morrow, and whether you will come back safely from your journey. Oh dear, I wish you were not going," her present grievance returning with full force; "but would it not be nice," she continued, "to have such a glass?"

"I doubt," said Chang, "if it would make you any happier," judging from his greater knowledge of the world, and thinking that perhaps the scenes in such a glass might prove but sad ones after all; and he was right. Wang-fu was weeping bitterly beneath the taunts of her harsh mother-in-law; Francho, instead of being at dinner, was sitting with a very frowning face over some large business books, and making the unpleasant discovery that his cousin's son had been trying to cheat him; and Evelyn was sitting at the head of her uncle's late-dinner table in a large old-fashioned London house, and though she smiled bravely her

heart was very sad, for she had that morning bidden Tom farewell before he started on another long voyage. One guess, however, was pretty correct. Her mother was scolding Ning-pu, who stood before her mistress very cross and sullen.

The entrance of Nancho put a stop to the conversation. "What have you two been talking about?" she asked.

"Oh, Lingsam has been talking a great deal of nonsense; but I must say she has some funny fancies, and also it seems," he added a little satirically, but Lingsam did not understand satire, "a great thirst for knowledge."

"Have you heard his news?" said Lingsam sorrowfully.

"Yes, dear. How we shall miss him!"

"Do not fret too much. I do not want to find two corpses on my return," said Chang. "Mother, Lingsam's sister lives at Twa-tou. I am going to make inquiries about her."

"Are you going all alone?" asked Lingsam.

"Yes. Would you not like to come with me?"

"Oh, do take me," said Lingsam in a fever of delight. "I should so like to see sister again."

"My dear son, what a mad idea!" said Nancho.

"I don't see that," returned Chang, who had not really meant it when he first spoke, but who, on seeing

Lingsam's enraptured little face, determined to carry out his audacious scheme if possible. "I shall be very lonely by myself. The journey is a very easy one; and then Lingsam would see her sister."

"But such a proceeding is most unusual and against all custom."

"I do so wish it, mother," said he, unable to refute her words, but determined for once to defy custom; "and she can have one or two servants with her as well, and she has not seen her sister for years."

"O mother, do let me go," pleaded Lingsam.

"Very well, if Chang wishes it; but people will talk if young folk will do extraordinary things, so you must prepare yourselves for that," said Nancho, who saw a very obstinate look on her son's face, and gave way, for she never could bear to vex him.

"You are not afraid of being drowned?" he asked, turning to Lingsam.

"Not if we are drowned together," she replied in true lover-like style.

"You must leave baby behind," said Chang.

"I should like sister to see him; but we ought to leave him with mother, for she will miss us terribly."

"You evidently have a good opinion of yourself, Lingsam," Nancho replied; "but I shall be quite at a loss without either of my children."

CHAPTER VII.

Temptation.

“ Whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave,
Far, far away, did seem to mourn and wail
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin as voices from the grave ;
And deep asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.”

TENNYSON.

“ I AM going to visit my uncle Maachi, mother,” said Chang the next morning. “ I want to talk to him about some business he asked me to inquire into for him while I go to Twa-tou. Do not expect me back very soon, for he is a terrible old gossip ; but it is as well to keep the right side of the old fellow.”

His mother smiled assent, and with a parting glance at Lingsam, who stood beside Nancho, after having rescued his toddling baby from an undesired acquaintance with the floor, he departed.

In a fine house at the other end of the city lived Yeh Maachi, an old man, much respected by his fellow-

citizens, not only on account of his venerable age, but because he was also very learned and wealthy. For wealth receives the same respectful admiration in Sintau as it does in London.

Outstripping Chang, let the reader act the part of the proverbial little mouse, and listen to a conversation that is taking place between Yeh Maachi and his nephew Lao. If the said little mouse had wished to use his eyes as well as his ears, and had chosen to peep out of his hole and make observations, he would have beheld the old gentleman seated on a very high-backed, richly-carved chair, his long pigtail fastened up comfortably to keep it out of the way. He had every appearance of being—to use a military term—at ease, in spite of the uprightness of his chair. In his hand he held a tiny cup of tea, which he sipped slowly with great relish. On his forehead, however, a little puckered frown might be seen, and any intelligent mouse, of whatever country, would have gathered therefrom the fact that something was annoying him. As it was evidently not bodily suffering, it must be caused by mental worry—so would have argued Mr. Mousie, had he been a Solon among mice—and seeing how it deepened as Lao spoke, would have decided, even if he had only known the twice table in arithmetic, that therefore it was Lao who was the cause paramount of the said worry.

Lao had given his uncle an infinity of trouble ever since he had returned empty-handed from Canton. Indeed, as Maachi was inclined to allow to himself, though never to others—for he was very proud of him, in spite of everything—his clever, ne'er-do-well nephew had nearly bothered him (please excuse the slang) into his grave.

Lao was sitting forward, explaining and illustrating a new scheme with energy.

“See, uncle,” he said, “this tea-cup”—and he pointed to the tiny vessel in his hand—“is Australia.”

“I have heard it is rather a big island,” said Maachi. “I certainly am sure there would not be room there for any one if it is no bigger than that cup.” And Maachi smiled at his little joke.

Lao glanced at him angrily, but managed to call up a slight smile in answer.

“Honoured uncle,” he said respectfully, “you are always amusing; but I know you understand me. Now, Melbourne is at the south side of the island. The climate is good, and there are many Chinese there, some of them doing very well. I have heard of one fellow there, a friend of a friend of mine, who has made quite a fortune, and has married an English wife.”

“The more fool he,” said Maachi. “Do you want to go and do likewise?”

"I could do without the wife, if only I had the fortune," said Lao dryly.

"You are as bad as the English—always money, money with you. I have heard say that they worship a golden god."

"I think that is about true; but they cut up their god into little pieces first," said sharp Lao, with his most cynical air. Then, seeing an opportunity of bringing to the front the subject that was weighing on his mind, he continued: "After all, there is great truth in the English saying, 'Money is power.' What can one do without cash? Just think now, all this grand scheme of mine," he added, "which I am sure would soon realize a fortune, cannot be executed just because of the want of a little ready money. Will you not help me, uncle?" he asked very humbly, thinking he observed a relenting look on his uncle's face.

And, indeed, Maachi was just then thinking that this present plan was really not so very unfeasible, after all, and that if Lao were in a new country he might do better. "At any rate, I should have a little more peace." So his cogitations concluded.

Just at this very moment Chang, whom his uncle was expecting, having been apprised of his intended visit, was announced by the servant, and Maachi rose to greet his guest.

"Just my luck," thought Lao, grinding his teeth, and feeling mad with his cousin for his innocent interruption. But he greeted Chang cordially enough to bring a cynical smile to his uncle's face; for Lao believed in being good friends with all men, and his cousin might some day be useful to him.

Chang was in most excellent spirits, both with himself and with all the world. He had thoroughly enjoyed his late trip, and was delighted at the success of the mission intrusted to him by his uncle.

"When do you start on your visit to Twa-tou?" asked Maachi, when at last all the formalities of the greeting were over, and Chang had finally taken the seat he had so often politely refused, and had been presented with tea by the assiduous servant.

"On the first lucky day," answered Chang.

"Report says you take your wife with you. Of course you can do as you like, but I had rather be excused."

"So would I," said Lao, *sotto voce*.

"It is my own wish," said Chang in a very humble tone; "her sister lives there, and she wants to see her again."

"A case of devoted husband. But if you take the advice of an old man, it is better not to do eccentric things. You are over-young, poor boy, to be at the head of a household."

"It is very lonely at times," said Chang with a sigh, thinking of his dead uncle and cousin.

"And you are more thrown with your womenkind than is good for you," said Maachi calmly.

"I called to-day to ask you—" said Chang, anxious to change the subject.

"Yes, yes, I know—presently," answered the old man, glancing at Lao, who soon left the room and the house, wearing an aggrieved air.

"Why should that wretched Chang always be trusted and treated as so much better than I, just because he has money?" he growled to himself as he walked along the road.

Just then his thoughts were agreeably turned by his meeting an acquaintance he had lately made, and together they entered a tea-shop to have a chat.

He, however, seemed fated to be haunted by his cousin Chang that afternoon; for they had not long been seated before Chang entered the same shop, and seeing his cousin, and being anxious to prove that he had nothing to do with Maachi's rudeness, walked deliberately up to him to express a hope that he had not interrupted his conversation with his uncle.

Lao's answer was a polite fib. He then introduced him to his friend, and Chang joined them at their little table.

A very animated conversation ensued, and Chang

became deeply interested in hearing Lao's new friend's brilliant and clever description of life in Australia, for he it was who had put Lao's "grand" scheme into his head.

Long before Chang desired it, and at the most interesting part of the conversation, however, Machu—for such was his name—suddenly, after whispering something to Lao, made a move.

"Where are you going?" asked Chang; "I wanted to hear more. I know of one who is desirous of investing his money in a new and lucrative enterprise, and perhaps—"

"O Chang, I know just the thing!" cried Lao, enchanted, as he saw a chance of profit to himself—"a fortune to be made easily," he continued.

"And with safety?" asked thoughtful Chang.

"Walk with us and I will tell you, as we go, more about Australia and the fortunes daily made there," said Machu, longing to continue the conversation and persuade Chang, but longing still more for his favourite drug, for he was a confirmed opium-smoker, and had been on his way to the saloon when he had met Lao.

Chang, therefore, dismissed his sedan-chair, on which said chair many envious glances were thrown by his two companions, as they beheld it on coming out of the tea-shop.

"Rich," thought Machu ; "what a Feng-shui he must have!"

"Lucky dog!" thought Lao, turning quite green with jealousy.

Very soon, talking eagerly, they came to the door of the saloon.

"Are you not coming in to have a smoke?" asked Machu, as Chang was about to say good-bye.

"I never smoke opium; it is a bad, pernicious habit," said Chang, rather loftily.

"But who wishes you to make a habit of it? I only smoke occasionally myself," said Machu, whose occasionally meant whenever he had enough money to indulge in a pipe.

"You might as well come into the place; it won't bite. But there; you are too young to know anything about such a wicked place, sweet innocent," said Lao.

This speech touched Chang's two weakest points—strong curiosity, and a dislike at being considered young and childish, when he felt such a man.

He stood hesitating, and without more ado Machu, yearning all the more for his beloved pipe now it was, so to speak, within his reach, seized his arm and drew him into the passage; Lao following with a grin of satisfaction on his face, not that he so much wished his cousin harm, as that he desired that the young

fellow, always held up to him as an example, should be a little less white.

"I will just look around only and see what it is like," thought Chang, "and soon slip out."

A very low long passage led into a large room at the back of the house. Passing through this room, crowded with the poor thus fruitlessly spending money badly needed for the necessities of life, they came to another and smaller apartment.

Lao and Machu, both familiar with the place, soon procured lounges, Lao gently pushing Chang on to the one next to his. It was very soft and comfortable, and Chang sank upon it with delight, for he was very tired. It was still early, and the room was not at all full.

A sweet, sickly odour filled the room from the fumes of the opium, and a cloud of smoke prevented his seeing at first; but as his eyes grew accustomed to the surroundings, he recognized several acquaintances, some of whom he would of all people least have expected to meet there. The room was gorgeously decorated, and a fine Chinese lantern hung from the ceiling.

Very handsome pipes, and bowls containing English opium, were placed before them; for Machu and Lao were doing it this afternoon in style.

Chang spoke to one of his acquaintances, but got

no answer but an unconscious stare, which proved that the senses were benumbed.

Meanwhile the attendant had placed pipes before them all three before Chang was aware of it.

"Are you going to smoke?" asked Lao, as he quietly held his pipe over the tiny lamp.

"No," answered Chang. "The man made a mistake. I think it is a most degrading habit."

"Why should one pipe lead to acquiring the habit?" asked Lao indignantly.

He then took a puff or two in silence, and with apparently great satisfaction, whilst Chang chatted on to him until he noticed his cousin was not listening, but was fast succumbing to the influence of the opium fumes. He glanced at Machu, only to find him quite unconscious.

"I must be going," he thought. "What a disagreeable odour the smoke has; it makes my head ache. What fools these men are to be smoking the filthy stuff! I am sure I could never do it."

Well had it been for Chang if he had carried out his intention. But the very air of the room made him sleepy and disinclined to move. So he sat on, vaguely wondering, and intending to go every minute.

"How happy they all look!" he thought; "yet I know that Yang yonder has just lost all his money,

and Machu only a few minutes ago told me he was miserable."

Even Lao's face had lost its usual bitter, satirical expression, that hard look that Chang had always so much disliked.

"It must be indeed a potent drug, and have a wonderful effect," he thought.

Just then an attendant passing by looked with contempt and disgust at Chang's still full bowl, and then turned his eyes, with a scornful expression in them, on the young fellow himself.

"Fool! to have a bowl of opium" (his idea of Elysium) "before him, and not smoke it," he thought.

Chang was quickly influenced by the actions and thoughts of others, as the reader will remember. He had entered the opium den with the fixed determination not to smoke. Indeed, had any one suggested such an idea to him as the chance of his being tempted to alter his resolution, and counselled him to keep away from temptation, he would have replied, "I can trust myself." For poor Chang, like a good many other Chinese, and English also for that matter, fancied his weakest point of character his strongest, and would have said of himself that he was a very firm, nay obstinate man.

Besides, had he not hitherto despised the very idea, and often, being young and enthusiastic, discoursed

logically on the folly of opium-smoking, with its dangerous results ?

But the room in which he was now sitting, full of the nauseous fumes of the drug, was not the best place for drawing logical conclusions. A languidness was creeping over him which would have made any reasoning difficult ; and strong upon him came the desire, that strange desire, more or less in the heart of all men, to do as others around, whether wisely or not, are doing—that unreasonable instinct, one might almost call it, to copy, to follow. It is this strange fallacy that makes the comparison of men to sheep so true ; for will not sheep always follow blindly on ? It is said a whole flock was once destroyed just because of one having fallen over a high cliff and been killed ; for, alas ! the others would go and do the same clever deed, even though it was to their hurt. Do not men in England wear high hats, and ladies bustles, just because other people do ?

Thus Chang, having without difficulty resisted Machu's example and Lao's retorts, yielded to the scornful look of the attendant.

Almost mechanically he picked up the pipe and put it to his lips, a sort of dreamy idea, it could not be called active thought, floating in his mind that whether he smoked or not, anyway that fellow should think he did so. The man passed on, and copying

Lao, Chang drew in with a long breath the noxious fumes. Again and once again he really must put it down and go home; but no action followed on the half-formed resolution, for the sensation the drug inspired him with was novel and fascinating, and he felt that strange "joy," shall we call it, for want of any better expression, experienced in doing what is wrong, and which is aptly illustrated in the English proverb, "Stolen waters are sweet."

Still his better nature bade him be a man, and make an effort to give up this dangerous experiment. Even now he might have conquered but for the subtle influence of the drug, which every minute crept over him more and more, making the power of thought more and more impossible. He was like the little bird which, though it would fly away, is held bound by the glittering eye of the cruel serpent within the fascinating gaze of which it has unwittingly flown.

Gradually he became unconscious as the opium fumes obtained more and still more power over him.

He dreamed he was wandering with Lingsam (who, meanwhile, poor little woman, was wondering where Chang could be) in a delicious garden, a soft breeze blowing on their faces, surrounded vaguely with lovely sights and sounds, the ground beneath their feet seemingly carpeted with fair flowers; and Lingsam his beloved was more beautiful than ever. Above all, there

was over all a sense of restfulness, soft, indescribable restfulness. Then the scene changed : he was in his friend's house, the same friend of whom he had been speaking to Lao and Machu, and before them were piled up heaps of gold, and his friend was embracing him, and was telling him that it was through him, all through him, he had made his fortune ; and all the time the same feeling of perfect restfulness was upon him. Again, he was out at sea with his little boy, of whom he was so passionately fond ; but the ocean seemed to have been hushed to rest, and rocked only the gentlest of lullabies. He felt so far, so very far from trouble and care, it did not distress his chained senses ; and then baby and sea, and every other sensation, sank into a restful oblivion.

When he at last again became conscious and opened his eyes, he beheld the same attendant carrying away his pipe. He felt very ill, and wearily dragged himself up, and paying the cash asked by the man looked round for Lao. He was gone. Next he looked for Machu, and found he was still unconscious, or rather drugged.

“ I suppose I must go home,” he thought wearily. “ How ill I feel ! ” and he rose from his couch and made his way to the door and out into the open air, which somewhat revived him, for it was getting late and there was a cool breeze blowing. But he still felt

very faint and ill, for opium sometimes serves its novices as tobacco does the sad youngster who has just tried to copy his father and be a man and smoke.

Just outside he met Lao, who had been in reality lingering about waiting for him, very fearful lest he should forget his promise of seeing his friend about his investment.

"I am glad you had a try," he said. "Delicious sensation, is it not?"

"Yes," answered Chang, longing to be back under the influence of the opium, all the more so as he now felt so wretched and depressed, which made the contrast seem more delightful than ever.

"Machu is still there," he remarked.

"Yes," answered Lao; "he will stay some time yet. He is a regular slave to opium, and always on the smoke either at his own home or at the saloon. He won't live many months if he goes on like that."

"How dreadful!" said Chang; but he did not feel much inclined for conversation, and the two walked on in silence till they reached Chang's house.

"You will not forget to-morrow," said Lao as they parted.

"What about to-morrow?" asked Chang, passing his hand over his aching brow.

"Why, your promised visit to your friend Pu-tao. Shall I go with you?"

"Oh, I remember now," said Chang wearily. "No, I had better go alone; but I will see you later and let you know the result. But I shall not be able to inquire much into the matter till after my return from Twa-tou."

And Chang entered his own house looking so wretchedly depressed and cross that his cousin ejaculated to himself, "That little wife of his will catch it,"—a fact which caused him apparently genuine satisfaction; not that he had any reason for disliking Lingsam, save that he was envious of Chang's pretty little wife and happy home. He was like the mischievous school-boy who will tease a dumb animal, not from any feeling of bitterness towards the poor creature, but from a perverse pleasure in giving pain to others.

Women's eyes are quick. Nancho knew immediately she saw her son that something was wrong.

"You are late," she said; "your uncle must have detained you some time. Here has Lingsam been imagining you were drowned at least."

"You should not be so silly. Of course I was all right," said Chang crossly, as he flung himself into a chair, vexed to think his lateness had been noticed.

"Don't you want something to eat?" asked Nancho.

"No; I am not hungry," and he lay back feeling as though he loathed the very thought of food.

A little smothered sob from Lingsam broke the silence that ensued.

“What is the matter, Lingsam?” he asked, starting up. The question brought the tears thick and fast. She was not, as has been stated, accustomed to self-control, and her husband’s words—the first cross words he had ever spoken to her—seemed to her very hard to bear. She looked a very disconsolate little bundle of clothes; for it was winter-time, and she was warmly clad.

Chang had as great a horror of woman’s “most effective weapon” as any Englishman, and was full of consternation at the effect of his peevish little speech.

“I did not mean to be silly, but you were late; and I did not exactly think you had fallen into the river, but still you know it might have been so,” explained Lingsam lucidly through her tears.

“Why, I thought at least baby was dying,” said he. “I am sure I never meant to vex you.”

“I suppose I was rather silly,” said Lingsam, true to her old theory that whatever Chang did or said was right.

“It was more your manner than your words that frightened her,” said his mother gravely. “What is the matter with you?”

“I have got a headache,” said Chang, without assigning any reason for it.

Mother and wife were ready instantly with sympathy and nursing, the former going in search of some particular scent she said always did her head good, while Lingsam sat by his side and gently stroked the offending member.

That night Chang lay wretched and wakeful, too conscience-stricken to sleep, tossing on his hard bed. He had fallen in his own estimation, and he knew also how terribly grieved, if ever his afternoon's escapade came to her ears, his mother would be. He wished most heartily he had never entered the smoking saloon. Should he confess to his mother? Better he should tell her than any one else. He would in the morning. Had he not once before told her the whole story, and been helped and guided by her? Had he not then promised never to keep anything back from her?

Yet strong upon him all the time lay the subtle influence of the drug which had thrown around him all its most fascinating power, and seemed to be calling him like the lovely but baneful siren of the old legend of the Rhine who with sweet music lured her victims to destruction. Surely the beautiful Lorelei is but an apt type of the dangerous, fascinating, fatal power of opium-smoking. "Oh," he sighed, "for one moment of that blissful restfulness which I experienced this afternoon!" He forgot that it was that short

delirium which was accountable for the misery he was then enduring.

But in the morning confession did not seem so easy as by night, and Chang decided to keep his own counsel, telling himself that it was only for once, only this once. He would never, never so fall again. Chang forgot or did not know the old saying, "Once is once too often."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Sisters.

“ Knowledge by sorrow entereth,
And life is perfected by death.”

E. B. BROWNING.

LINGSAM was burning incense on the family altar, but her busy thoughts were far away ; for to-day, after repeated postponements so as to be sure of travelling on a lucky one, she and Chang were at last to start on their journey.

Indeed time pressed ; the chair which was to convey her to the boat (Chang was to follow later) was ready, and the good-byes must be said. Lingsam's heart failed her at the last moment. Had she but been able to keep Chang at home, the chances are she would have given up the much-longed-for trip, for it seemed to her well-nigh impossible to leave her baby boy. But at last the final hug was given, and with a rather smothered “ I know you will take good care of my precious one, mother,” she allowed herself to be placed in her chair, and with her servant was borne off to

the boat. Arrived there, she was safely deposited in a very comfortable little corner, where she could see without being herself much noticed, the servant-maid taking her stand beside her.

She looked about her with interest, the strange new scenes entralling her attention, though she was rather alarmed at the noises made by the men.

Chang stood talking to some fellow-merchants until the last moment, and her little heart throbbed with joy as she noticed how much they seemed to respect him.

“How are you getting on?” asked Chang, coming to her as soon as they were well out of sight of the port.

He felt rather shy, and was glad to see that the crew were too busy to pay much attention to him.

The boat was about thirty feet long and five broad, and had a covered house amidships, just within which Lingsam was seated. At the stern sat the helmsman and master, while the boat was propelled by two dirty-looking, half-naked men standing face to the bow. A small sail had also been hoisted, as the wind was in their favour.

“It is very pleasant,” answered Lingsam to her husband’s question; “but I cannot help wondering what baby is doing without me. What a number of boats there are! Oh, I hope we shall not go down.”

she added as the frail craft shivered, and she began to feel as if she had been rather too venturesome.

But the boat journey was accomplished without any mishap or the ducking little Lingsam feared ; and Chang, having got over his first feeling of doing something wrong, enjoyed her company, and congratulated himself on having broken away from the old trodden paths of custom.

The village of Ma-ow, where they left the boat, and from which place they were to perform the rest of the journey on chairs, was a fairly large place. It boasted, however, of only one inn, whither Lingsam was escorted by her maid. Chang lingered about outside, trying to look as if he had never seen her before, until the position struck him, even though a Chinaman, as rather absurd, and reflecting on the fact that no one would know him there, he too entered and partook of a hearty meal, for he was very hungry ; but he delayed thereby Lingsam's dinner, for for her to eat with him never occurred to either of them.

But while she was eating he continued by her side talking, amused by her quick questions, but thinking all the while that he "would never have heard the end of it" had Lao been there to see.

"Look at that foreign gentleman ; does he not look funny ?" whispered Lingsam as a new arrival entered

the inn ; and looking through the door of the inner apartment in which they were sitting, Chang beheld Maurice Graham. He had never seen him since the day Maurice had laughed at Lao's speech in the tea-shop, though he had received, as the reader knows, Evelyn's gifts through his agency. Both instinctively started as their eyes met.

"Who is he ?" said Lingsam, seeing her husband recognize the new-comer.

"The Englishman who lives at the opium refuge in our city."

"The same who sent my English lady's presents to me ?"

"Yes."

"Will you not speak to him and ask him how she is ? I should like to know."

"It would not be etiquette," said he.

"It does not matter," said Lingsam with a little pout. "He is a foreigner, and will not know better. Besides, it is not as if it were in the city. Please, do !"

One thing leads on to another, and Chang actually consented, though rather scandalized at himself for so doing ; but he found Maurice most eager to accept his advances.

After a good deal of preliminary politeness Chang came out with his question.

"We were much obliged to you for sending the letter from your—friend," the last word with a slight hesitation. "Is she well?"

"My cousin is well now. She has been very ill, or else she would have written before to you, immediately on hearing of your marriage."

"Has she got a baby? I have."

This little speech caused both men to turn round, and there, in the doorway, partly hidden by the loose curtains, they beheld Lingsam.

"So this is Evelyn's little friend. What an animated face!" thought Maurice as he answered,—

"My cousin's little baby girl is dead."

"Oh, I am sorry; but still it was only a girl. I have a boy." This latter information was given with the utmost pride.

"Did you tell her about our marriage?" asked Chang, signing frantically to Lingsam to retire.

"Yes; she asked me to let her know if ever I heard of it."

"How did she guess we two would marry?" said Lingsam excitedly, forgetting every sense of decorum.

"She knew," said Maurice, looking at Chang, "that you had tried to save her life." This was said with ready tact, not alluding to the garden scene.

"He is very brave, and very good, and very handsome," said Lingsam, pointing to Chang, and added,

"Do you not think so?" Rather a hard question for Maurice to answer.

"You are very happy?" asked he, looking at her and putting a question in his turn.

"Oh yes; I have the kindest of husbands, a good mother-in-law, and a baby. Did my lady marry that ugly man who laughed?" she continued.

Maurice kept his countenance with difficulty as he wondered what Evelyn's feelings would have been could she have heard Lingsam's innocent description of her beloved Tom, but his tone was slightly bitter as he said laconically, "Yes," for he felt a jealous pang as he listened to little Lingsam's words.

"Is she your sister?" asked Lingsam.

"No; but I know her very well," he answered.

Meanwhile Chang, thinking it would be the quickest way of putting a stop to the undesirable conversation, had gone in pursuit of the chairs, which had not yet made their appearance, though they had been ordered some time before. He was very much scandalized at Lingsam's behaviour, though, as we ever do with those we love, he tried to frame excuses for her.

"She does not know better," he thought. "It is my fault for bringing her away from mother. I must not be so self-willed another time. I am only so grateful there is no one I know here to tell of her conduct at Sin-tau. It would disgrace me fearfully."

Little Lingsam, however, though conscious that she was naughty and that mother would be horrified, yet felt a wilful determination to know more about Evelyn. She was not naturally shy, and Maurice's manner was not such as to make her so.

"It was a pity her baby died," said Lingsam to Maurice, again referring to the subject on her mind. "Still it was only a girl. I did hope she had a little boy."

"We think as much of the girl babies as of the boys," said Maurice.

"Oh, yours is a very strange country, and a very bad one too, mother says. I should not like to live in it. All the people living under ground,"—"and wearing such funny dresses," she thought, but decided it would be rude to say that.

"But I like my own country best," said Maurice quietly.

"Then why do you live in China?" answered Lingsam quickly. "But of course you get a lot of money for living here."

"That is not true," responded Maurice.

"But why, otherwise, do you live in our country if you like England better?"

"Come; the chairs are ready," said Chang, appearing with the servant, who looked astonished at seeing her young mistress engaged in conversation with a

foreigner, and who afterwards gave to her fellow-servants a long story with only this simple fact for a foundation.

“Please thank Mrs. Towers for her presents again,” said Chang.—“And especially for my dear little mouse,” added incorrigible Lingsam as she was borne off to her chair; and after many bowings and “fistings,” as Tom always called the “chin-chin” manner of acknowledging an equal, Chang followed her, and the small procession moved forward. Chang’s chair was a long way ahead of Lingsam’s as they marched along, and then last of all came her servant. They had, therefore, no opportunity of talking. Lingsam, alone as it were with her thoughts, began to realize how improper her conduct had been, and to wonder what mother would have said had she seen her. But the strange sights and sounds she saw and heard soon made her forget Maurice.

“We must stand aside,” said the men one to another as they were passing along the principal street, “for a grand funeral is coming by.” As the men pushed for places to stand in, Chang and Lingsam’s chairs came so close together that Chang could speak to her. The funeral was indeed a very grand affair. The mourners wore white instead of crape; the men being dressed in a rough sort of blouse of sackcloth with a white sash of silk round the waist. First came the

bearers of large white paper lanterns, always picturesque objects ; then followed a band of musicians, making a horribly discordant noise with drums and gongs to drive away the evil spirits ; and then other men carrying trays of cakes and other good things for the funeral feast. They were followed by more musicians, apparently trying to drown the noise of the first instalment. They wore clothes of the common blue colour with a white band. After them were coolies bearing pigs roasted whole (shade of Charles Lamb appear !), kids, and various other savoury meats ; and then appeared a grand sedan-chair, in which was placed "the tablet" of the deceased, with long tapers burning before it. Behind the chair followed a group of men dressed in red and holding aloft a large red flag, with an inscription thereon in gold characters telling of the virtues of the dead ; and then lastly came the coffin, very handsome and solid, and formed of four large boards rounded at the upper side, and about four inches thick. A brave array it was as it marched past under the glittering heaven and took up the street and the time of the passers-by for upwards of a *quart d'heure* ; and even then our friends had to "wait a bit" for the dense crowd to become somewhat lessened before proceeding.

"What is going on there ?" asked Lingsam, as looking round she saw a blind beggar take up a position

a little way off and prepare to read out of a big book.

“I will go and see,” said Chang, and he descended from his chair and made his way—no easy matter, for there was already quite a crowd around—towards the centre of attraction.

The wind was favourable for Lingsam to hear, and the beggar’s voice was loud, and thus distinctly on her ears fell the words,—

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“Only a beggar reading,” said Chang, returning to his chair.

“How did he learn?”

“An Englishman taught him, they say.”

“But he is blind; how could they teach him to read?”

“I don’t know; the English are able to do nearly anything, I think.”

“It looks like magic,” said Lingsam superstitiously.

“Yes it does. He was reading a Chinese translation of the English book which they say is from the gods direct.”

“Who said that about rest? It sounds nice, but it is not for me, for I am neither weary nor heavy laden, but a very happy little woman,” said Lingsam contentedly.

“We must be getting on again now,” remarked

Chang, and the chair-bearers started again at the word of command.

Meanwhile Maurice Graham, having had something to eat, wandered out into the streets until the boat he had ordered was ready. He felt in a strangely discontented mood. The conversation with Chang and Lingsam had reawakened painful thoughts, and Lingsam's last speech had annoyed him much. It was hard to be wrongly judged and accused of money-grubbing, when, by his own act in coming to China, he had renounced the bait of fame and riches which had hung in all its dazzling temptation before his eyes.

But how could Lingsam know his real reason ? how could she understand that, following the example of his Master, love towards her fellow-countrymen and deep compassion for them had made him forsake his own land and come to hers to "spend and be spent" for them ? She had never heard, none had ever come and told her those three little words, the first text that children lisp, but the key of the evangelistic message, the deepest of gospel truths—"God is love."

But Maurice felt ruffled ; he was but human, and though he had rejoiced to see Lingsam so joyously happy, an uncommon sight enough in down-trodden China, a pang of envy lay deep down in his heart.

He was going back home, as he ever called the opium refuge in his mind ; but there would be no sweet

face to welcome him, no little ones to climb upon his knee. He felt strangely lonely this afternoon, and longed for sympathy, for help ; but like the Saviour, who when of old he sought for comfort from his chosen three in his hour of trial found them asleep, no human friend was near. The busy crowd around hurried by, seeming to say, in the words of the poet,

“ Go ; thou art naught to us nor we to thee—away,”

or stared at him painfully ; while the little street boys called out, “ Look at the foreign devil.”

But Maurice was pretty well inured to being stared at, and bore it calmly enough, and anyway the streets were preferable to the dirty inn. And as he walked listlessly along he came upon a group of people. Curiosity caused him to pause and go nearer, but being rather short he could not manage to see anything. But on his ears fell like sweetest music the words, “ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

The blind reader closed the book and rose to seek a new corner ; the people began to disperse ; and Maurice pursued his onward way rejoicing, for the short message had entered his soul, all the more forcibly maybe because it came to him in the Chinese language, and the earthy clouds of faithlessness and depression were dispelled.

Early the next morning he arrived at Sin-tau, and very soon he was as deep as ever in his labours of love. Nevertheless he found time to send Evelyn a few lines to tell her of his strange meeting with her little friend.

Very interesting to bright little Lingsam were the wonders that surrounded her on her journey, and she thoroughly enjoyed the strange world on which she had entered. On leaving Ma-ow the road followed the course of the river—the same river, as Chang told her, that wound slowly through their own city, but which was here a rushing stream, tumbling and rolling along and making a great deal more fuss than when later it bears many a junk on its broad bosom.

“What is that noise?” asked Lingsam, but at the same moment discovered for herself as they came in view of a pretty cascade. Lingsam was as charmed with the sight as if nature had provided it especially for her entertainment.

“Is it not glorious!” she cried in awestruck tones; “but rather dreadful.”

Could she, however, have compared it to that giant of the New World which Yankees boast could soon extinguish the fire of Vesuvius, or to the rolling waters of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, or even to the “Geissbach of England,” beautiful Ara Force, with its dark fierce background of rocks, almost meeting arch

overhead, and the noble sheer descent of the water, she must have owned it to be but a very little one.

Shortly afterwards the path turned off from the river, and they began to ascend the steep hill-side. Lingsam was surprised to find that the higher they got the higher the mountains seemed to grow, new peaks arising where she would never have dreamt of looking for them.

So is it on the journey of life, an uphill journey enough to most. As we ascend, the way opens out, and where the mountains seem most impenetrable a path is found through some narrow cleft, and often-times where the road seems most clear some hidden peaks arise to arrest the traveller.

On either hand, on the hill-side terraces, were fields of bright poppies, golden, purple, red, which latter would have recalled to Maurice (had he been there to see) the corn-fields of his native land. Fair were they to the sight, but beneath their drooping heads, which hung as if burdened with a sense of shame, lay hidden the seductive poison for which, alas ! they were cultivated.

“Poor mother!” said Chang; “that sight would make her sad.”

They were giving the bearers a rest, and Chang had come to the chair in which Lingsam still sat to ask whether she was all right, when he made this remark.

“ Why ? ” said Lingsam in answer.

“ It used to be against the laws of our land to grow opium, but now it is much cultivated. I cannot see why it should not be either, or why the foreigners only should profit by the baneful drug which is the curse of China. The land might be used to better purpose by growing rice or corn, but the opium pays better.”

Just then a terrible sound fell on Lingsam’s ear, and she clutched at the nearest bit of Chang she could find, which proved to be his pig-tail.

“ Whatever is it ? ” she cried.

“ Why, only a donkey,” answered Chang, rescuing his unfortunate plait.

“ Then it should not make all that noise,” answered she crossly, angry with herself for being frightened, and seeing that Chang thought her very silly to be such a coward.

Soon after they were again on the march, and in a little while found themselves on the main road. They had hitherto been taking, for the shortening of the journey, by-paths across the hills, under the direction of a guide.

Even pleasure is fatiguing, and Lingsam grew very tired. The road became dustier and dustier ; it was getting late also, and the wind proved very cold ; so that it was a real joy to her when at last, after a quick turn

in the road, Twa-tou became visible through the dust and gloom. A few minutes after they had passed the gates, and were standing at the door of the house where they were to stay during their short visit to the little town, and which belonged to a relative of Chang's.

Lingsam was delighted with the little mountain city in which her sister dwelt, and was very eager to be off to see Wang-fu early the next morning ; but Chang said that he must first call on her husband, so Lingsam had to restrain her impatience for awhile. At last, however, much later in the day, she and her chair arrived at the door of her sister's home.

Wang-fu's husband met her and conducted her in silence across a long passage and into a large room, where sat a sour-looking elderly woman, to whom he presented her, saying that it was his mother.

Lingsam bowed herself with becoming reverence, almost touching the floor with her head, and then looked eagerly round for her sister, but she was nowhere to be seen. Only two girls, younger than Lingsam, were in the room, and a woman many years her senior, the wife of the eldest son, Wang-fu's brother-in-law.

"Where is Wang-fu ?" asked Lingsam, feeling very shy and awkward.

"I have sent for her," was the answer.

Just then there entered a pale, hollow-eyed woman with a slow, weary step.

Could this be Wang-fu?

But if Lingsam did not recognize this weary, sad-looking creature as her sister of old, Wang-fu instantly knew little Lingsam, who looked the same as in those happy days of long ago, only more womanly, more beautiful.

The tears rose to her eyes as she threw herself into her little sister's arms.

"What a fuss! Dear me, Wang-fu *is* delighted," whispered one of the sisters to the other; and the mother-in-law said hastily,—

"That is not the way to welcome your sister; you forget yourself;" and then again bade Lingsam in a peremptory tone to be seated.

Lingsam obeyed meekly, and was at once overwhelmed with a torrent of questions as to her journey, life in Sin-tau, etc., which she answered to the best of her ability, feeling very cross the while at not being able to talk to her sister, who stood by dejected and silent, while the mother and daughters admired Lingsam's clothes and jewels.

"You have lovely ornaments," said the mother; "but I think your husband must be rather a strange man."

"Why?" asked Lingsam, burning with indignation.

"Whoever heard of so mad a thing as bringing you

on a journey like this ? Of course, if you had been going to settle here it would have been very different ; but as it is, it is a most outrageous proceeding. I wonder your mother-in-law permitted it."

Lingsam felt very angry, but she began to think as she listened that Nancho had been right after all, and she was miserable at the idea that any one should blame Chang because of his over-kindness to her.

"Have you a son ?" demanded her interrogator.

"Yes, a baby boy."

"I wonder you could leave him."

"Mother is taking care of him," she answered, the tears rising to her eyes at the thought of her child, for it seemed so long ago since she had seen him.

"Have you any children ?" asked she of her sister, looking up at her the while.

"Go and fetch Chi," her mother-in-law demanded of Wang-fu, who disappeared thereupon, to return anon with a little girl of three years old in her arms.

"She has no boys," said one of the young girls in a tone of utter scorn, and Wang-fu sighed and looked miserably guilty.

"I am very sorry," said little Lingsam, as she delighted the child by giving her some sugar-cane ; and then, after she had shyly begged the mother-in-law's acceptance of a small jade ornament, presented to her sister the really valuable presents she had had so much

pleasure in choosing for her with Nancho's help before she left home.

"Wang-fu ought indeed to be gratified," said her mother-in-law scornfully, pointing to an embroidered dress.

"And bangles too! She will be too grand for us poor folk," said one of the sisters with a titter.

"It was kind of you to think of me," said Wang-fu in a low voice. "But mother is right: these things are much too fine for me." And her mother-in-law remarking that Lingsam must need some refreshment, Wang-fu left the room, and Lingsam had to undergo another course of questioning, until presently Wang-fu returned with a servant, who carried some dainty food, which Lingsam forced herself to eat, being afraid to refuse, though she felt very choky.

Just then an attendant ushered in with great ceremony the master of the house, his son (Wang-fu's husband), and Chang; whereupon the mother signed immediately to her daughters to retire, which they reluctantly did. Chang was duly presented first to the mother and then to Wang-fu, who received a scowling glance from her husband, who was comparing her with her pretty sister, and the comparison did not please him. Poor Wang-fu stood trembling with downcast eyes as Chang kindly asked her if she liked Lingsam's presents, and if she thought they would be useful.

"Yes," she answered in a low voice, which caused her husband's wrath to descend upon her devoted head.

"Cannot you speak?" he growled.

Lingsam was very glad to see Chang, though she could not forget what had been said of him, and felt very shy. He saw his little wife's downcast face, and pretty well divined the cause, so was not very much surprised when on his return home late that evening he found Lingsam in tears.

But he very soon brought back her smiles when he told her that, as he thought she had not seen much of her sister that day, he had asked Wang-fu's husband to consent to her paying a return visit alone the following afternoon.

"I had some difficulty in persuading him, but he is very anxious for the use of my name in an affair in Sin-tau, so consented in the end. You see, little one, it is a good thing to have an influential husband."

"You are the very best of husbands, and so thoughtful," answered Lingsam. "Oh dear, what should I have done if I had married a horrid old man!" And she went to bed having come to the conclusion that her Chang was just "a darling pet,"—at least that is how an enthusiastic young English lady would have translated her thoughts.

When the next afternoon came round it brought

with it Wang-fu, closely veiled, and looking very nervous. But Lingsam's bright welcome soon reassured her. Her loving little sister made her sit down and rest, and having called to the servant to bring some tea, settled herself at her feet just, as she remarked, like old times.

They had much to talk about, these two sisters, and Wang-fu rejoiced as she heard from Lingsam's eager lips the story of her happy love; for Lingsam, in the fulness of her heart, poured it all out, led on by the eager questioning of her elder sister.

"He must be very good," said Wang-fu. "I thought him very handsome."

"Is he not?" answered Lingsam; but added, lowering her voice, "I fear I am very selfish. Tell me, dear, about yourself."

"I think I must have been married on the most unlucky day of all that year," sighed Wang-fu. "But I like to hear about you and your home, dear sister; your story is most interesting."

"I do not like your mother-in-law at all," said Lingsam.

"She is very unkind," replied Wang-fu; and drawn on by her sister's loving sympathy, she told of her petty daily vexations and the spite of her mother and sisters-in-law, which made her life one long misery.

"She hates me," she said.

"Why do you not tell your husband?" said innocent Lingsam.

"Tell *him*! He is cruel, cruel. He despises me because I have no boys, and he is so passionate. It is quite impossible to please him," she added. There was a dull despair in her attitude as she leant back wearily which was sadder than tears; but Lingsam could not understand her sister's apparent calmness.

"Do you not care?" she asked.

"Oh yes; but I am getting accustomed to it all."

Happy little Lingsam could not even guess half the bitter meaning of that last sentence, but her heart ached for her sister.

"How I wish," she answered, "that you had a baby boy like mine."

"So do I," sighed Wang-fu longingly; "then I should not be so despised."

"Have you had no other children?"

"One little girl; but he and his mother decided they could not afford to bring it up."

"What did they do with it?"

"Left it in the streets."

"I could not have borne that," said Lingsam, her mother instinct on fire.

"Every one does it; and it was best for the poor little thing," said Wang-fu indifferently.

"I shall pray that you may have a baby boy just

like mine, and offer offerings for your sake at the temple of Kum-fa," said Lingsam. "How I wish you could see my treasure!"

"The chair has come," announced the servant; and Wang-fu rose.

"But you have not seen Chang."

"I dare not stay," was the reply.

"Good-bye then," sobbed Lingsam. "I do wish you were happier."

"It is fate," said Wang-fu resignedly; "but, my sister, it gives me great joy to know you are so blessed." And unselfish Wang-fu went away feeling happier than she had done for many a long day; while Lingsam, throwing herself on the now vacant divan, argued the question in her own mind as to whether she could ever get used to such a life as her sister led, and her rebellious little spirit answered a determined "No, never."

Next day Chang and she left for their return journey, and were soon home; and Lingsam greeted Nancho with extra warmth as she felt how good, how kind she always was to her.

And so ended Lingsam's first journey, from which she learned that increased knowledge does not mean always increased happiness, and was more than ever confirmed in her opinion that she had the loveliest boy and the best husband in all China.

But although she knew it not, a terrible shadow hung above her unconscious head. Alas ! Chang could now no longer hug to himself the comforting thought "only once," for he had yet again tasted the poisonous sweetness of the opium-pipe.

CHAPTER IX.

The Road to Ruin.

“ Let us alone ! what pleasure can we have
To war with evil ? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave ? ”

TENNYSON.

“ Children ! there is nothing upon earth
More miserable than she that has a son
And sees him err.”

TENNYSON.

CHANG did not forget his promise to see Pu-tao, and talk to him about the investment Lao and his friend had spoken to him of as so lucrative and full of promise.

The result was that one day, a week or so after his return from Twa-tou, he made his appearance at the door of the office where Lao generally was in daily attendance ; for he was supposed to help his uncle in his business, though for all he really did his services could easily have been dispensed with.

Chang, after the usual number of “ chin-chin-ings,” entered at once into the business, and was soon deep in conversation, for he was anxious to get every infor-

mation, and had come armed by Pu-tao with a whole phalanx of questions.

Lao found himself utterly nonplussed, and being shrewd enough to know that the, to him, delightful game of invention was not a safe one to play in this instance, for once owned himself ignorant, and proposed an adjournment to Machu's house.

"Why ever does he live here?" said fastidious Chang as they stopped at a very small house in a poor neighbourhood.

"Poor as can be, and burdened with a wife and children," answered Lao, with a shrug of his shoulders which was most expressive. "I am glad my betrothed died," he continued.

"Fortunate for her also," thought Chang.

A weak-looking, miserable woman, her eyes red with weeping, stood in the court holding in her arms a thin little baby.

But that she had the insignia of rank in China, even the atrocious little lily feet, Chang would never have believed his ears when he heard his cousin ask her if her husband was in the house, and a wave of pity surged over him as he thought of another mother and child.

"He is in there," she answered, pointing to a curtain on the left, and gazing intently on Chang as he followed Lao, who disappeared immediately through the opening.

The room, which was most meagre and filthy in appearance, filled Chang with utter disgust. On a hard couch in the centre lay Machu, armed with his beloved pipe and a newly-prepared bowl.

"Just in the nick of time," thought Lao; a thought Machu did not echo, but he was terribly "hard up," and knew this was his last chance of winning back some of his lost fortune, and one not to be thrown away even for his favourite indulgence. So with a sigh he resigned himself to the inevitable, and though suffering both bodily and mentally from the deprivation he was obliged to undergo, yet threw himself with as much heartiness as he could muster into the discussion that arose, though his heart's desire was with the pipe that lay so temptingly on the table before him.

Chang, as he drew forth answers one by one to his many questions, began to think that the project was not likely to be so brilliant a success as he had at first imagined. He therefore, anxious to be sure of his ground before advising his friend further, outwitted Lao by remaining on when that gentleman, seeing matters were not particularly favourable towards his cause, pleaded an appointment as an excuse, and proposed concluding the interview.

But Lao was not the only one disgusted by Chang's resolution. Machu was beginning to feel that he had borne his present tantalizing position long enough.

He had offered both Lao and Chang opium-pipes on their arrival, but they had refused.

When, however, the presence of Lao, of whom Machu stood in much awe, was removed, he determined on a bold game, and again offered Chang a pipe, not expecting him to accept, but hoping thus to make an excuse for smoking his own.

To his surprise, however, Chang accepted his offer, and his so-called friend rose to prepare a pipe for him, getting quite excited as he explained that he had some particularly beautiful and delicate opium sent him by a friend from Hong-kong.

Chang, alas ! all through the conversation, interested though he had been in it, had felt an innate drawing towards that impish-looking pipe, and a passionate longing to taste again the fascinating drug, though he had not intended to succumb to his evil inclination ; but when Machu framed his sudden, unexpected question, his lips, ere he had time to pause and consider, in an affirmative answer expressed the desires of the mind.

Even now he knew it was not too late ; he could still refuse and fly from the house and temptation.

Far away he seemed to hear a soft low voice beseeching him not to throw away his happiness and peace of mind by indulging in the untrue excitement, in the strange shadowy bliss, for which his soul craved.

But would not Machu think him rude if he now refused, after having first accepted his kind offer ? It was only for once, and so on through all the one hundred and one excuses man can always frame for doing what he desires. Excuses ! are they not even the most dangerous of all forms of self-deception ? Ere the list was finished the pipe was ready and in his hand, and the next downward step taken on the “ road to ruin.”

Ah ! how very easy always proves that downward path ; of it indeed is the French proverb true, *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.* Is aught more difficult than to stay the course of the stone that is rolling down the mountain-side, or to help the man habitually overcome by any one besetting sin, whatever it may be ? Well it is for the sons of men that the God who ruleth in the heavens is He with whom nothing is impossible ; otherwise who would not oft be tempted to despair both of himself and of those he loves.

As on the mountain-side the easy, rapid descent is ever followed by hard, laborious climbing ere the unwary traveller regains the former heights or ascends still loftier ones, so is it with the upward path of virtue. But by the great law of compensation which governs the world, the weary climber is rewarded by a wider view and a purer air ; whereas during the easy descent into the valley every step lower the air is less bracing,

the heights are less visible, and soon the mists of the vale encompass and envelop their victims.

When, an hour or so later, Chang returned to his house, the fascinating poison had again worked its will, unresisted, and had left him weaker both in body and in mind than before to conquer the deadly appetite which was threatening to overpower his manhood. He had now no desire to confess to his mother of his visit to the opium saloon; for he knew that confession meant renunciation. He therefore received without a word of explanation the solicitations of Nancho and his young wife, even allowing to pass by in silence a sad little remark of anxious Lingsam's that she hoped he was not going to have a fever and die, for she was sure she could never live without him. Thus, as usual, one sin succeeded another, and Chang concealed the truth, trusting that to his women in their secluded lives might come no whisper of his new and sad passion.

Of course he said to himself (like the child who, having gone as near the edge of the river as possible, yet remarks, "I did not mean to fall in"), "I do not mean to become an opium-smoker like Machu, but I like it, and I mean most certainly to have an occasional pipe as Lao does." But Lao had a constitution like iron, and was in every way very unlike his passionate, noble, eager young cousin.

Next day Chang again called on Machu, because, so he deceived himself, it was necessary to hear once more one or two of his arguments. His friend Pu-tao was not very eager about the new investment; indeed it was not until after several visits and much consultation that the question was finally settled to the satisfaction of Machu and Lao, but rather against the better judgment of Pu-tao, who, however, found relief in the reflection that Chang was a much cleverer man of business than he was, and that his judgment was surely to be trusted.

By the time Lao and Machu started for Australia, the latter leaving behind him his broken-hearted wife and young children, Chang had, from "an occasional pipe," grown to be an ardent devotee of the god of opium, though not smoking so much at the opium den as at Machu's house.

Machu had willingly procured him the opium for his most welcome ready cash; he had not scrupled also to charge enormously for commission, and would chuckle to himself as the "gulled" Chang paid him, without questioning, exactly what he asked.

Perhaps—who can tell?—Chang, when his so-called friends had left the city, might have conquered his new temptation even then, but for an unfortunate discovery made by poor little Lingsam on the morning following their departure.

Machu had made what he called his last bargain for Chang, and obtained for him some more of the extra good opium of which he was always boasting. Some of this precious drug—precious certainly as regarded money—Chang had carelessly left on a little slab, and Lingsam, with the usual wifely curiosity, a characteristic of wives not confined to Chinese ladies, finding the small parcel, opened it.

“Whatever is this?” she asked.

Guilty Chang looked round. “Put that down,” he said sharply.

“Why?” answered she, her bright innocent face raised to his.

Quick as lightning he took in the emergency.

“Listen to me,” said he, taking advantage of her ignorance and simplicity. “Can you keep a secret?”

“Of course,” answered Lingsam, looking pleased and important.

“Promise me not to tell mother then, and I will tell you something, little woman.”

“Yes; but why must I not tell mother? You always tell her everything, you know.”

Chang winced under the innocent little remark. “But she must not know this, Lingsam. Promise me,” he said. “It would make her so unhappy.”

“I promise,” said Lingsam, secure in her faith that Chang could not do anything wrong.

"I am not very strong," he began.

"I thought you were quite well."

Chang paid no attention to her answer. "I am taking this as medicine, dear," he continued; "it does me so much good. I am in pain, and I am miserable, Lingsam, without it, and you would not like me to be miserable, would you?"

"Oh no; but why must not mother know? and what is the name of the medicine?" she asked, looking at the opium in her hand.

"Mother would be so anxious about me, and I do not wish her to be worried; and the name, little one, would be too long for you to pronounce."

And thus Chang deceived his young wife, and laid upon her tender heart the weight of a heavy secret, and with her unsuspecting help he continued still to indulge his wild passion, and even taught Lingsam to fill his pipe, she never doubting, in her trustful love, but that all was well. But she often wished, nay, even pleaded with Chang from time to time, for permission to tell Nancho; yet, true as steel, she never betrayed his secret.

Thus weeks passed on, and Chang became daily more and more a slave to his unfortunate habit. He was rapidly changing from the bright, interesting, popular youth, into a miserable, moody, deceitful man.

Both Lingsam and Nancho noticed the alteration in his countenance and manner. The former attributed it to his new illness, and longed all the more that his mother knew all about it; while that loving mother, unable to account for the change in her beloved son, fretted sorely about him. He was still as loving and tender and gentle to her and Lingsam as ever, if possible more so, yet already the shadow of his sin had spread itself over the once happy household.

So things continued, until one day some one (is there not always some one ready, especially if the news to be related be bad?) first hinted and then told Nancho how "people" were talking about Chang and his most unfortunate addiction to opium. She denied it indignantly, and so did Lingsam. But when the gossip had gone, Nancho sat still with set face and clasped hands. An awful thought, a terrible dread was upon her. Could it be possible that her own son had become a victim to the one vice she most hated and loathed?

Before evening the storm burst, metaphorically speaking.

Chang came in, tired, ill, cross, for he had not smoked his beloved pipe once that day, and immediately went to his own room to indulge in the much-desired narcotic.

Then his mother did what she had never done

before, for she had her suspicions. Leaving her own apartments, she, taking little Lingsam with her, crossed the long, winding passage between them and her son's part of the house, and suddenly entering the room where he was, after a sharp, quick knock, caught him, red-handed, as it were. Nothing could have hurt her more.

Nancho's temper was quick and very high when roused, and bitter indeed were the words she poured out on her startled son that afternoon—sharp words, true in a certain sense, stinging and caustic in their power, but not those most calculated to win him from his passion. He could hardly believe his own ears. His mother to speak like that to him! But astonishment soon gave way to resentment.

His filial respect kept him silent as, rising abruptly, he left the room and house.

“What right had she to come into my part of the house?” he thought angrily; and Nancho had indeed broken through the usual Chinese etiquette in so doing.

Yet deep down in his heart lay a feeling of bitter shame, not so much for the sin of opium-smoking itself as that his mother had discovered his addiction to it. “I wish I had never had that first pipe,” he sighed, and looking up he found himself just outside the entrance of that same opium den where he had first yielded to the subtle influence which had

now obtained such tremendous power over him. He had been walking hurriedly, not heeding whither he went. A terrible temptation seized on him to go in and have a smoke in peace. It seemed irresistible. The physical exhaustion which now attacked him after any long abstinence from the drug was upon him. After but a minute's indecision spent in listening to the voice of conscience, he deliberately disobeyed the little monitor which bade him refrain from evil, and entered quickly. He was weaker to resist his desires than when first he crossed that dangerous threshold, weaker both bodily and morally ; and also the remembrance of his mother's anger only frightened and irritated him, but did not draw his heart towards her or make him desire to please her. Ashamed of himself, miserable as he thought on her words—those dreadful, bitter words which had fallen from those lips from which before he had never heard one word of reproach—he in his wretchedness longed but to drown her voice in the Lethe of the soothing though poisonous drug. Thus Chang sank further still into the mire of sin, and this day, which might have proved a turning-point in his downward career, passed by and left him oblivious of his own sin and of the bitter sorrow and pain of those dear to him, his senses enthralled beneath the baneful influence of the alluring narcotic culled from the beautiful poppy.

Meanwhile his mother, the vehemence of her passion having subsided, yearned for the son who, until that miserable day, had ever seemed to her the very embodiment of her fulfilled wishes, and whom yet she loved with all a mother's love for her only child, though she knew, and the knowledge was bitterest agony, that the perfect confidence she had until now placed in her son was gone for ever; for had he not deceived her, and disobeyed her very strictest command?

"He knew," she thought in hard displeasure, "my horror of opium-smoking and the opium trade. Ah, my poor husband! he always said it would prove the bane of our country; but that his own son should have become an opium-smoker! Our Feng-shui must indeed be against us," and she sighed the weary sigh of one whose brightest hopes are crushed.

And what of little Lingsam? Poor child—for indeed she was hardly more than a child in years even now, though with the troubles of the wife and mother on her young shoulders—she could not grasp like her mother the dreadful tenacity of the sin and the fatal consequences oftentimes of it; but her little heart was oppressed with the thought that her beloved husband had done wrong, and what he himself (and this was a puzzle to simple Lingsam) had always condemned in others. And then, had he not deceived her?

Could it be indeed true, she thought, that what he called medicine had been after all opium—the dreadful drug she had always heard so much spoken against? Perhaps mother was mistaken, and after all it was good for him to take it, with his illness. Mother knew nothing about the illness. But could she have been deceived in this also? she asked herself. Was this said illness after all a fictitious one? No, she could not believe it. Her sweet, child-like faith in him she loved was not broken, though so rudely shaken. And therefore of those three, little Lingsam was by far the happiest, for love still sheltered her, and in her ignorance she could hope where Nancho, with wider knowledge, could only despair.

Indeed the heaviest weight on Lingsam's mind was the dread of what Nancho would say if ever she discovered her secret and knew how she had often prepared that very pipe of his with her deft little fingers in her ignorance. How angry she would be, she thought; and though Lingsam knew that she would not deserve that anger, still she trembled violently, for had she not only that very afternoon seen Nancho in a storm of passion? The tender little heart had been almost overwhelmed with horror as she had stood a silent witness of that terrible scene between mother and son.

Thus began a new era in little Lingsam's home-life.

Many and many were the long discussions between Nancho and Chang, ending oftentimes in tears and woe. In weary fluctuations of hope and then despair the days dragged slowly on, as Chang, in answer to his mother's prayers and entreaties, made many faint struggles, coupled with real desires, to conquer his terrible craving for the opium. But, alas! it was like the famous crab's walk, one step on and two backward, or like the sad floundering of the captive fish. Not that he was deaf to his mother's entreaties, but a subtle temptation had taken fearful hold on him, and he seemed completely overcome by it.

Ofttimes he felt that he would give much to be his old self again, free and contented as of yore; but as day by day and week by week passed on, he desired it less and less, as the fatal influence of the drug more and more enthralled him, and he gradually became more dead to higher and nobler thoughts.

And then came another turning-point to Chang, another place where the two roads met, and he might choose either the steep path which alone could save him, or follow still the "road to ruin" to the bitter end.

One afternoon, returning from the opium saloon, now his daily resort, he met his friend Pu-tao, and walking with him Maurice Graham.

Maurice's face saddened as he beheld Chang, for

his practised eye soon saw that he had been smoking opium ; but he did not speak, only bowed gravely as Pu-tao introduced him.

“ I am glad to see you, Chang,” cried Pu-tao. “ I want to speak to you. I never can find you at home or at your business.”

“ You are engaged, are you not ?” said Chang rather sulkily.

“ Not so much so that I cannot speak to you. Mr. Graham will excuse me,” and he turned to Maurice with profuse apologies which were courteously acknowledged.

Then they all, Chang very reluctantly, made their way to Pu-tao’s house, which was close by, Pu-tao grasping his arm, determined not to lose sight of him now he had at last met him, for he was most anxious to know if Chang had heard from his cousin Lao lately.

“ I will fetch those papers for you, Mr. Graham,” he remarked when they were all seated.

“ Thank you,” answered Maurice, and watched the fussy little merchant bustle off.

He soon returned with the desired documents, and Maurice, seeing his room was wanted more than his company, rose immediately he had swallowed the cup of tea brought by the servant. (He had quite got over his old English preference for milk and sugar.) A short but decisive struggle had been taking place in

his mind as he sipped the choice beverage, as to whether or not he should offer his help to Chang. "I could cure him if he would let me," he thought. "Ought I not to tell him so, and plead with him to come to the Refuge, if only for the sake of his little wife? But what is the use of doing so? It will only bring on me an uncivil refusal most likely," and Maurice's proud spirit hated refusals. He therefore compromised.

"Will you not come up and see my Hospital and Refuge some day?" he asked pleasantly. "We have just added some new beds. It is really worth a visit, and I can promise to give you some tea."

"Thank you," said Chang warmly. "I should like to do so very much."

"But not a pipe, Chang," put in Pu-tao. "Mr. Graham professes to cure men of all such evil propensities. He is the man for you."

Chang looked very annoyed at this remark, and Pu-tao continued,—

"You are a strange people, you foreigners. Your Government makes a fortune by selling opium to us Chinamen, and you and others spend your life in trying to cure the victims of it. Surely it would be much better if you stayed in England and stopped it from being sent to us, for we Chinamen would be glad to do without both the disease and the remedy."

And Pu-tao stopped, quite out of breath, for this was a long speech for a slow John Chinaman.

"Do come, if you can," said Maurice, still speaking to Chang and apparently ignoring Pu-tao's long speech, for he knew not how to answer it. But there was no response from Chang this time. At last the polite bowings which make the simple parting of acquaintances in China, where no one ever is or certainly ever ought to be in a hurry take as long a time as it takes an ordinary Englishman to catch the train he has sighted, were over, and Maurice was on his way home.

Very disheartened he felt, angry with himself that he had not been braver, had not tried to press more strongly upon Chang the necessity of striving to overcome the curse of opium-smoking, and wondering if he should ever get accustomed to speeches like that so lately made by Pu-tao, speeches he heard nearly every day. "I do not believe that I ever shall be," he thought, even though the old proverb says, "Eels get accustomed to skinning."

Half an hour later Chang left the same house in an equally ruffled state of mind; for he had annoyed Pu-tao by his nonchalance, and the latter had not scrupled to tell him some home truths not pleasant to hear. As he returned to his own home, remembering happier days, when he had been able to face the

world without thought of shame, and was honoured by all his fellow-citizens, he almost decided on going to see Maurice Graham, who, he knew, might succeed in curing him of his pernicious habit.

Later that same evening Chang visited his mother and wife in their apartments, but no glad exclamation greeted his entrance.

“Chang, have you been to the saloon to-day?” asked Nancho.

“Yes, mother.”

“After your promise of yesterday?”

And then ensued an uncomfortable pause, broken by a long sigh from Nancho.

Meanwhile Lingsam crept softly to Chang’s side—for did she not still love him dearly?—but a hot tear dropped on the hand she had tremblingly taken, and Chang knew it was because of his folly that it had fallen.

“I *will* try to conquer this opium-craving,” he thought, with a more resolute feeling in his heart than he had ever felt before, then said aloud,—

“Mother, I am going to see Mr. Graham at the Refuge. I met him to-day.”

A still longer pause followed his words, and then Nancho answered,—

“You know how I dislike foreigners. I believe you wish to go just to annoy me. At one time you

used always to obey my wishes like a dutiful son. I forbid you to go there."

"I will not go if you do not desire it," answered Chang willingly enough, for he was already repenting his resolution and dreading the consequences—never another pipe. "And perhaps I might not be able to be cured after all. Mr. Graham never said I could be, and I should vex mother for nothing," he thought.

Thus, whether owing to Maurice's pride, or to Nancho's prejudice, or to his own weakness, Chang still continued his headlong course of sin and folly,—down, down, down; and what shall save him?

CHAPTER X.

England and China.

“ Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

BURNS.

LITTLE Lingsam was wandering slowly about in the beautiful garden belonging to her home, her hands filled with freshly-gathered blossoms white as snow, which reminded her of Evelyn ; for had she not worn those same beautiful flowers in her peculiar dress that eventful night ?

“ I wonder,” thought Lingsam sadly, as she recalled that evening, “ if her husband ever smokes opium ; ” and then she heaved a little weary sigh. For, alas ! during the last few months the young wife had been serving an apprenticeship to sorrow, and her heart was very heavy as she thought on her husband’s mad devotion to the opium-pipe.

Little Lingsam still, in spite of everything, loved Chang dearly ; and with whomsoever else he was irritable, he was ever gentle and kind towards her.

Nancho could hardly understand the love these two bore towards each other, or realize the tender affection awakened in those kindred souls when they had met but to be separated ; or how to each of them the remembrance of the other had been as a bright star on a dark night, until kind Fate had brought them together once again, to be reunited by the holiest of bonds. In China a husband is not supposed to love his wife. At any rate, it is not quite *comme il faut* there to own to doing such a foolish thing ; but hearts are not easily kept in order, and men and women will "fall in love," if they get a chance, whether it be the custom of their country or not. Affection is not always to be controlled by the laws of men, and "love" is the most self-willed of virtues, and will "e'en" have its own way if it can.

But it was not only the sight of her fragrant bouquet which had caused Lingsam's thoughts to recur to Evelyn and Tom Towers. That very day Chang had brought her a little clay figure, not very well proportioned and but roughly executed. It was the figure of an Englishman, holding in one hand a ball of opium, in the other a large umbrella. This work of art(?) he had purchased of a man in the street for a few pence, who had had no intention of caricaturing when he had thus modelled his clay, but had only endeavoured to convey his idea of an

Englishman, and his idea is that of most of his countrymen.

"See, wife," Chang had said, placing it before her, "do you recognize your laughing friend?"

"It is not unlike," said Lingsam, pleased as a child with a new toy. "But what is he holding in his hand?" she continued.

"A ball of opium, of course," Chang had answered. "You know they send us opium in exchange for our tea and silk, and I think they get the best of the bargain."

"Your father used to say," put in Nancho, who was standing by, "that they wanted to destroy all us Chinese. During the war they killed thousands with their dreadful weapons, and then they would continue to send us opium to kill off the rest."

"O mother, surely that is an exaggeration!" said Chang; but Nancho still retained her opinion, held, alas! by others besides herself.

"I cannot think," said Lingsam, "why our Government does not stop the English people from sending us any more opium."

"Simply because it would bring about another war. You know that was the reason of our former wars with England—sad wars surely for us. And then we had to indemnify the English, and repay them for all the opium destroyed by Lin."

"He was an excellent man," said Nancho.

"Rather too impetuous," returned her son; "but he went the right way to work to stop the opium-smoking. And I believe he would have succeeded also, but for the English protection of the trade and the war that arose therefrom. A very good thing for 'the great kingdom' [China] it would have been had he and the Emperor Tai-pung been able to work their will,"—"and for myself also," he added *sotto voce*; for Chang never denied that the habit he had contracted was an evil one.

"Heaven will never bless the English nation. The way in which they have behaved to us is shameful!" said Nancho; and then the subject dropped.

It was this conversation that little Lingsam was pondering upon while wandering in the fair garden; the result of her cogitations being such a very grave little face that Nancho inquired, on joining her, "What is the matter?"

"I was only thinking about the English," she responded. "I wonder if they know what mischief the opium is doing to our people?"

"Of course they do," responded Nancho. "They are bad people—outer barbarians. Very, very different from us;" and she tossed her head with conscious pride of race.

"That must be our excuse for them," said gentle

Lingsam, "if they are not so enlightened as we are. I suppose they have never had good wise sages like Confucius and Mencius to teach them the right."

"Curse them!" murmured Nancho. "White ghosts! white devils! But come indoors now and finish your embroidery," she continued crossly.

Lingsam obeyed, although she longed to linger in the bright garden; for she had read that very morning how Heaven ever blessed the patient and dutiful daughter-in-law, and therefore with reluctant steps she turned towards the house.

The "opium war," as Mr. Justin McCarthy calls it, and the other war with China, which was in reality but a sequel of the same, are nowadays but matters of history. *Mea culpa*, however, should surely be the cry of the English nation with regard to the cause of those wars, even though they have led to the "opening up" of that huge country of China to the "foreign white devils"—the polite term applied by Chinamen to the pale-faced Europeans. And now, whether for good or evil, Western inventions, Western progress, Western civilization, are being gradually introduced into that ancient kingdom which, when our forefathers pursued the chase in the wild forests of Britain, was the same as it is to-day, with the same parental government, wielding as now its wonderful force throughout that whole populous nation, and teaching

the same lofty philosophy of the sages of old, and with then as now the same mighty aristocracy of learning.

But though the past is gone never to return, and the "old order changeth, giving place to new," yet still the opium trade, legalized by treaties signed under protest for fear of the cannon's roar, is carried on with China, not even by English traders, but by England herself, the nation that boasts so proudly of her equity, her noble laws, and her free subjects. Yet yearly the revenue of her great Indian dependency is augmented by taking advantage of the weakness of a people she despises as unequal to her in power, in knowledge, and in understanding.*

"I suppose my son is out," said Nancho to the servant, on her return to the house.

"Yes, madam," answered she, bowing herself to the ground before her mistress.

All the same Chang was not out, but in his own apartments. In his hand he held a letter, and his face wore a troubled expression as he read it; for it was from Lao, and contained many disagreeable facts. Lao had not been successful in his present any more than in his previous enterprises. Thus he wrote, and added that "he feared in a month or two at most he

* For further information on this subject write to the Secretary, S.S.O.T., Broadway Chambers, Westminster, S.W.

must throw up the whole business—that was, unless he could have large additional funds. But it happened," he continued, "that he had a chance of selling the whole affair, at a loss certainly, but that would be far better surely than the alternative. However, he could not proceed with the sale until he had had a letter from Pu-tao. Would Chang go at once and see him, for he must know by the next mail, or it would be too late to effect the sale ?

"I was a fool to trust Lao and Machu. I expect the latter is dead, as my cousin predicted, as he does not mention him." (Which said surmise was the truth.) "What a long time this letter has taken coming!" Chang thought, looking at the date. "I must go and see Pu-tao as soon as possible, for he must write to-night, or the letter will not arrive in time."

He was on the point of rising to go and pay his intended visit to Pu-tao, when his eye fell on his opium-pipe, always in a prominent position nowadays, and the never-satisfied craving for the drug came over him. He hesitated. He knew he ought to go at once to his friend and thus make the best reparation in his power for the harm he had done him; but he disliked and dreaded the visit, and it seemed to him some demon, whom he did not seem to have power to resist, drew him onward, onward, until the

pipe was in his hand, and he himself lulled into blissful, mad dreamland, while his manhood, his conscience, his whole nature, were being undermined by the deadly fumes of the poppy poison. Again he had yielded to the fearful temptation, which he was becoming every day less and less able to resist, as he succumbed more and more to the deadly influence, until it became almost a necessity to him.

But his conscience was not yet destroyed ; and when the debauch was over, and he sat sipping some coffee he had ordered, he awoke to the fact that he was now too late, and that Pu-tao was a ruined man. His remorse and contrition were extreme. Never had he so fully realized how fatal to his own interests, how demoralizing in its effects, was the course which he was pursuing ; how fatally strong were the chains he had been forging for himself by indulging in this one sinful, foolish habit, and succumbing to the poisonous fumes, which, however slowly, were equally surely destroying and ruining him both physically and mentally, body and soul.

“Oh that I could give it up !” he groaned in his bitter agony of remorse ; and then he remembered the opium refuge and Maurice Graham’s invitation.

He longed to see Maurice, but was shy about making the first advances, and also felt ashamed to own himself as being an opium-smoker.

And thus matters stood, when one day Ting-Chang received a letter from Maurice Graham, stating that his cousins were staying with him in Sin-tau, and were most anxious to renew his acquaintance ; and that, if he would consent, Mrs. Towers would like to see his wife again. Chang did not know of such a word as "providential," or maybe he would have used it to express his feelings on the receipt of this note.

Evelyn had been spending some months in America and Japan, as the English doctors had recommended her to have a thorough change of air and scene, and had proposed foreign travel. She was now on her way home with Tom, who had obtained three months' leave ; but before returning to Europe, she had persuaded him to bring her to China to visit some great friends. And then they had proposed to Maurice to spend a few days with him on their way back to Hong-kong, where they were to take the steamer for England—a proposal gratefully accepted by Maurice.

At first Nancho was horrified at the very idea of a visit from the English lady ; but afterwards, whether from curiosity, or whether from a laudable desire to please her children, she reluctantly consented.

"She has come, mother !" cried Lingsam, as the sounds of an arrival reached even the secluded part of the house where the women's apartments were situated.

Lingsam's black eyes glistened with excitement and

her heart beat high with pleasure as she and her mother-in-law sat in the largest of the apartments, waiting to receive their guest.

Nancho's face, however, bore a dissatisfied expression, which caused Lingsam to add sadly,—

“I am afraid you are sorry, after all.”

“I hate foreigners,” replied Nancho. “I was foolish to let you and my son overpersuade me. Besides, these English send us opium.”

“I know that,” said Lingsam, thinking to herself that her mother had told her so hundreds of times at least.

“I believe she will bring a curse with her, and our Feng-shui are already offended. Chang has, however, given me money to offer to-morrow to the god of riches at the temple, and also some for the collection of printed paper.”

“Oh, may I go with you to the temple to-morrow?” asked Lingsam eagerly.

“Yes. Hush! they are coming.”

An instant after, Evelyn, who had been accompanied by Tom and Maurice, and had been first received in the guest-hall, was ushered in by Chang, who, after he had presented her in due rotation to his grandmother, mother, and wife, retired, leaving the ladies alone.

“You must excuse my mother rising,” said Nancho.

"She is ill, and has lost all power in her legs. She is deaf also."

"I am sorry," said Evelyn slowly, as she glanced pityingly at the miserable invalid. "How old is she?"

"Sixty-five," said Nancho.

"Sixty-seven," interrupted the elder lady.

"Oh, that is quite young," remarked Evelyn thoughtlessly, and then saw, by the expression on the faces around her, that she had made a *faux pas*.

"How stupid of me!" she thought. "I had forgotten the Chinese eccentricity of liking to be thought old."

"Do you remember me?" she asked Lingsam, after a pause.

"Yes," was the shy answer.

"We were so glad to hear you had married your husband;" and then Evelyn felt she had made rather a silly speech. "Have you any children?" she asked next.

"Yes; a son. Would you like to see him?"

"Very much. I love children."

"May I send for him, mother?" asked Lingsam; and as Nancho signed an affirmative, Lingsam clapped her hands, and on an attendant coming at the call, she bade her fetch the child. Then looking at Evelyn she inquired,—

“ Why do you dress so peculiarly, and not like we do ? ”

Eva’s dress was a dark-blue serge, trimmed with braid, and tailor-made. Certainly it was a striking contrast to Lingsam’s loose garments. Both she and Nancho were dressed in their gayest and best. As it was winter, and the day was chilly, they were enveloped in clothes ; for “ piling on the agony ” in clothing is the only idea the Chinese have of warmth ; and little Lingsam, shorter even than most Chinese ladies, looked nearly as broad as she was high. Over all was a very bright pink silk robe, trimmed with pale blue, her long loose sleeves lined with the same colour. Her trousers, not unlike the divided skirts certain ladies advocate, were of the brightest crimson, and richly embroidered.

Her dark hair, dressed in a remarkably stiff style, was ornamented with pins and jewels ; her arms were bedecked with handsome bangles ; and her ears were dragged down by very heavy ear-rings. Nancho was equally gorgeously attired, only her vest was of brilliant carnation and beautifully embroidered, while her grass-green silk trousers, braided with silver, contrasted vividly therewith.

“ Why do I dress so ? ” replied Evelyn to little Lingsam’s question ; “ because it is the fashion in England.”

"What big 'boats' of feet you have!" said Nancho, speaking suddenly. "Your mother must be bad never to have bound your feet as a child."

Evelyn looked down at her feet, of which she was inclined to be very proud, as they were small and shapely. She rather resented the remark.

"The women of England never bind their feet. Why, they would not be able to walk."

"Why should they want to walk?" said Nancho with a sniff, as if she thought the people of England exceedingly foolish.

"You were not married when I saw you?" asked Lingsam; while Nancho frowned at her for referring to that night.

"No; we married on our return to England."

"So you knew your husband before your marriage, and talked to him, and—" But here Lingsam hesitated, catching sight of Nancho's frowning countenance.

"Oh yes," said Evelyn smiling, for she guessed what Lingsam was going to say. "Every one does in England. Why, Tom asked me himself if I would marry him."

"And you?" gasped Lingsam.

"Said yes," replied Evelyn. "My parents had very little to do with the matter, I assure you."

"Why did you say yes?"

"Because I loved him."

"A child's first duty is to its parents," remarked Nancho. "How did you meet him first?"

"At a party out of doors, where a lot of people get together, and eat and talk." And then she felt she had not lucidly described a picnic. At all events, she utterly failed to make either Nancho or Lingsam understand her.

"Are all the English married people happy?" asked Lingsam; and Evelyn replied in the negative, whilst Nancho shook her head sagely, thinking how much better they managed things in China.

"Here is baby!" cried Lingsam. Her exclamation was caused by the child's appearance in his attendant's arms.

"Will he come to me?" asked Evelyn, as Lingsam lovingly took the little boy and held him up to be admired.

"I think he will be frightened," was the answer.

But baby proved not to be at all shy, and willingly went to the stranger. Evelyn's eyes filled as she gazed on the quaint wee morsel looking up at her so solemnly with its bright black eyes.

"I like my little mouse so much, and the pretty picture of you. How did you get on to paper?" said Lingsam.

"By the aid of the sun," laughed Evelyn.

"What! does the sun come down and walk about with you?"

"No," said Evelyn; and then feeling quite unequal to the task of explaining the science of photography in her imperfect Chinese, she sought refuge in silence.

"Why did you undress first?" inquired Lingsam innocently.

"Undress!" exclaimed Evelyn in surprise. "Oh, I remember now; I sent you the one taken in my ball-dress—for dancing."

"What is dancing?"

Another puzzler. "Some people play music, and then the gentlemen put their arms around the ladies' waists, and they go round and round in time to the music."

"An awfully tame description," thought Evelyn. "How difficult it is to explain things!" But she had effectually startled her listeners.

"I suppose the gentlemen are the ladies' husbands. It sounds very strange."

"Oh no," cried Evelyn; "that would be ridiculous."

There was a pause of horror. Nancho's opinion of the "English devils" was not rising.

Fortunately tea came in just then, which was formally offered to Evelyn, who accepted the tiny cup; while Nancho took the opportunity to gain possession of her little grandson.

"We drink milk and sugar in our tea in England," said Evelyn, who thought that they would be a welcome addition to the beverage she held in her hand.

"How nasty!" cried Lingsam.

Evelyn, as she silently sipped her tea, began to ponder philosophically on how custom makes natural and right to many millions that which seems most horrifying and scandalizing to many millions more of other people, differing from them by education, by customs, by manners. And yet, thought she, how prone are we all to judge each other, and to consider that we, and we only, must be, can be, right, refusing to recognize the fact that right is not so much in the what as in the why, and that motive oftentimes justifies action. The knowledge should keep men humble, that what they are doing, in all innocence and uprightness of heart, may, in the eyes of others educated differently, be revolting and ridiculous and wrong.

Immediately Evelyn had finished her tea, Nancho pressed her with sweets and cakes, until in desperation she had to call out "Stop." Then Nancho and Lingsam brought their "treasures" and all their bright jewels to show Evelyn, and she gratified the young wife by stating that she thought Chang must be very good and kind to give her so many pretty things.

"You are indeed fortunate to have such a good husband"—"and darling baby," she longed to add; but

she remembered just in time how distressed Chinese parents are when their children are admired, for fear the evil spirits will come and take the child away.

“ Does your husband smoke opium ? ”

“ Opium ! no, only tobacco,” said Evelyn.

“ I smoke tobacco ; don’t you ? ”

“ No, English ladies never do,” replied Evelyn. “ No one smokes opium in England,” she volunteered. “ It is very difficult to get, and it is generally marked ‘ poison ’ in big letters, to prevent one from taking it.”

“ Then,” cried Nancho, “ it is true ! ”

“ What is true ? ” said Evelyn.

“ That you want to poison the whole Chinese nation,” and she looked triumphantly at Lingsam.

“ Want to poison the Chinese ! What do you mean ? ” asked Evelyn, wondering.

“ We were so happy, but now Chang—” began Lingsam.

“ Will you come with us to look over our rooms ? ” interrupted Nancho, who was determined Evelyn should not know of her son’s disgrace. She felt very angry with Lingsam for what she considered her forwardness with the stranger, as she walked with the oscillating step caused by the deformed lily feet through the women’s apartments, Evelyn following, and knowing what was expected of her, pausing often to examine and admire.

"Now we had better go into the garden," said Nancho, and then she called one of her attendants and mounted on her back.

Evelyn quite enjoyed her walk in the beautiful garden, and she and Lingsam found at last a point of agreement in their mutual love of flowers.

"Have you a large garden in England?" asked Lingsam, as they returned to the house.

"No; not since we gave up our home and came to live in London with my uncle," said Evelyn.

"What is London?"

"A city much larger than Sin-tau."

"Oh, but what do you do if you have no garden?"

"I go out in the streets," was the answer.

"Alone! Are you not frightened?"

"I am accustomed to it; and the streets are much wider than yours."

Then Evelyn determined to introduce a subject which had been on her mind during all the visit, so she put a question in her turn.

"Can you read?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Lingsam, eager to dilate on a knowledge of which she was very proud. "I read to mother often. This morning I read about a virtuous wife, who was so good and obedient to her mother-in-law, although she was very cruel to her. Can you read?"

"Of course. Every one, even the poor little boys and girls, learns to read in England."

"What do you read about in your books?"

Lingsam's question was repeated ere Eva found an answer; for she was racking her brains to think on the sudden what the many books she read were about, feeling sure only of one thing, that they were *not* about being good and obedient to mothers-in-law.

"About murders generally," stammered Evelyn at last, feeling that at the moment she could not truthfully say aught else, yet realizing that this speech was hardly to the credit of the vast educated portion of the British nation.

"I do not understand," said Nancho, for Eva had unwittingly used the wrong word in Chinese, which made her sentence only a string of nonsense.

"Murders—killing people," she explained desperately.

"I do not see what particular advantage it can be for your poor boys and girls to learn to read," remarked Nancho, when she had at last grasped the meaning of Evelyn's speech.

"Why did you wash your hair and face so pale?" asked Lingsam suddenly. "They are quite white."

"I was born so," answered Evelyn a little impatiently. "See, Lingsam, I have got a present for

you," she added. "It is a good, true book, all about the great God."

"Your God?" asked Lingsam.

"Yes," whispered Evelyn softly, as she produced a small Bible, nicely printed in Chinese, and gave it to Lingsam. "You will read it, will you not?"

Just then a slight cry arose from Nancho; for the book had been wrapped up in a loose sheet of one of the daily papers, and as Evelyn uncovered it, the paper had fallen to the ground, and Eva had accidentally nearly put her foot on it.

Lingsam, on seeing what had happened, bent hurriedly and picked it up, winning thereby her mother's approval.

"This is printed paper," she said solemnly.

"It is no good. Why, in England I should give it to the butcher to wrap his meat in," said Evelyn rather mischievously.

Nancho looked the picture of consternation at the very idea; and just then Evelyn was summoned to go to the gentlemen, who were waiting for her.

"Well, wifie, how have you got on?"

"I hardly know. I feel quite confused, and as if I was one big note of interrogation. It is the first genuine Chinese home I have ever seen; for the people I learned my Chinese from had been in New York some time, and were very American."

"What can Maurice be talking about to Ting-Chang? How altered the Chinese fellow is!" said Tom.

"Yes; and looks ill—his eyes all sunken."

"Then the day after to-morrow," said Maurice to Chang in Chinese, as he came forward and helped Evelyn into her chair.

"Maurice, she can read, and I gave her the Bible," whispered Eva.

"I am so glad, dear," he replied with a bright smile.

"I wish she was a Chinese lady, Chang," little Lingsam told her husband; "I cannot help liking her. But just fancy—English ladies go out all alone, and allow gentlemen to put their arms around their waists; and they live in tall houses, and have no gardens; and they throw away printed paper; and they read about killing people!"

"And they do want to destroy this nation with their wretched opium," announced Nancho.

CHAPTER XI.

A Cruel Kindness.

“A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the Morrow morn.”

COLERIDGE.

“Myself am hell;
And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threat’ning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.”

MILTON.

“**U**p to the excursion which we have planned for to-day?” asked Maurice Graham, as he and his cousins sat together at breakfast one morning, two or three days after the events recorded in the last chapter.

“Oh, I’m as right as a trivet, and slept like a top all night,” answered Tom, as he helped himself cautiously to a rather peculiar-looking dish offered him by the pig-tailed servant. “Good,” he remarked, after a gentle taste. “Tell him I want some more, Evie.”

“Maurice, how tired you look! Tom had better

return your question," said Evelyn, after she had obeyed her lord's command.

"I am quite well," replied Maurice, who was, however, looking very pale. "I have had a regular doctor's night of it, and broken rest always knocks me up. I feel as though I need the little trip, but I hardly like to leave my work."

"I shall take no excuse," said Tom. "You know that 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' You ought to think of yourself a little."

"Chairee comee," announced the servant, causing Tom to exclaim,—

"How fond those fools are of the letter e!"

"Mrs. Elliston is determined to have a long day with you, Eva; she has sent betimes," said Maurice, smiling.

"We are going to enjoy ourselves, I assure you," laughed Evelyn, as she went to get ready.

Eva had not cared to undertake the fatigue of the expedition the gentlemen had planned, and had therefore arranged to spend the day with Mrs. Elliston, the pretty young wife of the only other missionary in Sin-tau, who was delighted at the thought of having a long chat with her old friend, for she and Evelyn had been at the same school as girls together. Surely there is, as both felt, an unique pleasure in the renewing of such an acquaintance, and the happy recalling

of little scenes, little memories, aglow with the tender light of other days—of hearing also of those with whom we once walked side by side, but from whom we have long been separated by the flowing river of Time.

“It is a pity, Maurice, Elliston and his wife live so far from here,” said Tom, as they stood watching the sedan-chair safely out of sight.

“Yes; I wish they were nearer,” answered Maurice, as they turned to go indoors. “Come into the study and wait for me. I must go and see to my patients. If they are doing well, I shall be ready to start in about half an hour’s time, I hope.”

Maurice always called this room the study, in remembrance of the dear old room he and his friends had shared at school, and where they had not only studied, but sung, laughed, and cooked even, in those days now gone by for ever, when the great future of their lives lay before them—that future which was now being rapidly transformed into the present and past tenses. It was a very un-English-looking apartment, though, for all its English title; but Tom had a sailor’s knack of making himself at home anywhere and everywhere, and when Maurice next made his way to the room, he found him looking extremely comfortable, smoking away like any chimney, and with a novel in his hand.

"I am so sorry!" began Maurice. "I am afraid you will be terribly vexed. But I have been sent for to a very important case. It is some little distance from here, so I fear I shall not be able to accompany you to-day to see the temple; but to-morrow—"

"Well, it is a bore; but we'll hope it is only a pleasure deferred. Don't worry about me; I have my pipe and my book."

"I fear it will be awfully dull for you without either Eva or my humble self. But I expect to be back in an hour or so at most, and we will have a jolly bachelor's afternoon together, old man."

"I'm game!" called out Tom; but Maurice was already gone and out of hearing.

Tom returned to his novel, and read on contentedly. But all books, whether short or long, must come to an end at last, and this one proved no exception; and having first gazed fixedly at the Finis on the last page for ten minutes at least, he awoke to the fact that it was uncommonly "slow."

"Maurice ought to be back soon, surely," he thought, as he took a tour of the little room, making minute examination of every article, as if he was preparing an inventory. "I know I am jolly tired of my own company. I would go down and join Evelyn, but it is such a long way; and, besides, the ladies will prefer to continue their chat uninterrupted. I wish

Maurice had some decent books," he added aloud. The small collection of volumes in the room did not suit Tom's taste. "All goody-goody and dull," he decided.

He then strolled outside, and tried to hold a conversation with the Chinese servant, but failed utterly. Then he had another pipe, and strolled into the garden. There an idea seized him, and he quickly made his way across to the other side, where was the hospital—in reality, one side of the house.

He had an indefinite feeling that perhaps Maurice might be there. Any way, he was very tired of his own company, and Kai, Maurice's Chinese assistant, could talk a little English, he remembered. In the first apartment of the low long building were eight beds, all occupied by patients.

There is no need to describe the hospital—illness and suffering are alike everywhere; and few among my readers will there be who have not some time or other visited some of our large London or provincial hospitals, and can picture the scene for themselves. They know how the aching head lies so still on the pillow, and the sad face is drawn into deep lines of pain, whilst the heavy eyes watch languidly and feebly the actions of the visitor. But the cleanliness and brightness and airiness which cheer the spirit in the English Hôtel-Dieux are wanting here, for, do

what Maurice may, he cannot change the habits of the people. But the want of these was a continual misery to him, and caused the thought of work in the hospitals at home to seem as Paradise compared to his.

Tom Towers crossed the long narrow room with many a sympathetic glance at the miserable occupants of the low beds, and then, passing along a short passage, he entered another similar apartment, only smaller, in which were four beds.

Here he discovered the object of his search, for in the centre of the room stood young Kai, busy preparing some bandages.

"When do you think my cousin will be back?" asked Tom, by way of opening the conversation.

"I guessee soon," answered Kai stolidly. He had been once for three months in America, and spoke with a regular Yankee twang.

"What do you mean by soon?"

"He should have been back before this; something must have detained him," answered Kai. "I wish he would come."

"Why?" asked Tom. "Let me help you to roll those; I like to be doing something," he continued.

Kai instantly gave up his work to Tom, and folded his arms quietly.

"Like to be doing something! they must be mad,

these foreigners," he thought, his idea of bliss being to sit with folded arms gazing into vacancy.

Tom repeated his yet unanswered query.

"Bad cases," said Kai; "two. One there," pointing to one of the beds, "and one there," indicating the farther room. "Very bad there—dying."

"You take it pretty coolly," thought Tom Towers, shuddering.

"What terrible pain he is in!" said Tom, advancing towards the bed to which Kai had pointed, on which lay a Chinaman tossing and moaning, evidently in the greatest suffering. "Poor wretch! can you not give him anything to relieve him? Is he dying?"

"No, no; he be much worser first; but dyee sometimes. Pain bad," remarked Kai.

"What is the matter with him?" inquired Tom. But Kai did not hear him speak, being engaged in giving a drink to the patient.

"Why, it is Hsi Ting-Chang!" cried Tom in surprise, as the eyes slowly opened.

Chang looked up at the sound of his name, and it was evident that the recognition was pain to him, for he drew back instinctively. Perhaps he, as well as Tom, was recalling the time when they had first met. "Can it indeed be the same man, my specimen Chinaman?" thought Tom, as he gazed into the sallow, drawn face, with great dark circles round the eyes,

which were running with water. The long thin hand was convulsed with pain; but there was a touch of querulous eagerness in the low voice as he pleaded with Kai, who turned away with an emphatic "No," uttered in a supercilious tone, which evidently raised the other's ire.

"Confound that tower of Babel!" muttered Tom, as he placed one of his cool hands sympathetically on Chang's burning fingers. "I wish I knew what they are saying."

After a short pause Tom again ejaculated, "How I wish Maurice was here!"

"So do I," echoed Kai, who was talking to a small lad in Chinese. "The boy says the other man really dyee. I must go doee something," and Kai disappeared after profuse bowings.

The miserable look on Kai's face at the bare thought of "doee" almost upset Tom's risible faculties, though he was in anything but a laughing mood, and besides was disgusted at Kai's manner.

"Poor Maurice! why ever *does* he keep such a fellow?" But, as Maurice afterwards explained to him, helpers were not to be picked up for the asking at Sin-tau, and Kai was better than none, and very useful in his way.

Meanwhile Tom remained still beside Chang's bedside, carefully smoothing the tumbled quilt.

Chang, still in the same pitiful condition, lay watching Tom's kindly face, and a sudden thought occurred to him. It was a cruel temptation. He raised himself half up in an excited manner and pointed to a small lamp Kai had accidentally left in the room. After one or two frantic signs, Tom caught his meaning and brought it to him. Chang next signed to him to light it, which Tom, wondering still more, did ; and then Chang, groaning the while by reason of the pain of moving his aching limbs, dived under his hard pillow and brought forth his opium-pipe, which he had secreted there, not because he thought of using it, but because he had such a distrust of the foreigners, even though he had sought their help. He had entered the hospital with the most earnest desire and the most intense conviction that he would be cured of opium-smoking, unaware of the difficulty of the cure or the pain he must first endure.

The little lamp glimmered softly as Chang rapidly placed the pipe in position. It was already filled, for he had intended having one more indulgence in the fascinating drug before giving it up for ever, as he believed, but Maurice had dissuaded him from so doing.

Another instant and all Maurice's night's work will have been in vain—all the agony endured by Chang during those long hours will have been suffered for naught, for he will have fallen yet again, conquered

by his mighty foe; while the glimpse of a happy future, seen through the now broken telescope of what might be, will fade into utter darkness.

During that instant there arose in his mind a sweet vision of three dear faces—his noble mother's, his sweet young wife's, and his beloved baby son's. For their sakes surely he must conquer, so that life might be again as it once had been. He longed ardently to be as he once was—longed passionately to be able to give up the vile habit he had contracted, and which he now loathed even while he yielded. For he did yield. The present ever overshadows the future, and his every limb ached as if he was on the rack, and the craving for the poisonous remedy came upon him with overwhelming force as he held in his hand that impish-looking pipe, knowing that it would give him immediate relief and present ease. But at what a price!

Fellow-men, who know the power of temptation, fierce temptation, having felt its force; fellow-sinners, who know by experience how prone is the heart of man to evil, how maddening the irresistible desire; fellow-sufferers, who are aware how when in pain all things sink into insignificance when compared to the obtaining of relief—rest—ease, and how suffering expels all other thoughts, pity rather than blame the miserable man.

Miserable ! yes, for instead of overcoming he has been overcome.

But at present he realizes it not, but is only conscious that he is fast losing the cruel pain he has been enduring, as he becomes entranced instead in beautiful sensations and finds the desired rest.

The very length of time he had been without the drug seemed to give the narcotic a new power.

Tom was astonished as he stood watching the effects of the charm he had put within Ting-Chang's reach, and beheld the drawn face soften, the clenched hand unclasp, and the patient fall apparently into a restless slumber.

"Well, I have done a kindness for once in my life. I think I shall take out my diploma. I expect there was opium in the pipe, or he would not have fallen asleep so soon. Opium ! by-the-by," so his thoughts ran, " Maurice has people here to cure them of opium-smoking. Surely—" And then the colour mounted to Tom's brow ; had he made a mistake after all ?

He turned from the bed and met a very disapproving look on the face of the Chinaman opposite. He hurriedly left the hospital and made his way across the garden back to the study, where everything was exactly as he had left it.

He reseated himself in his own seat, having helped himself to one of Maurice's books, and was so deep in

the study of it when Maurice at last made his appearance, that he did not hear him enter the room.

"Tom—just where I left you!" he exclaimed in surprise. "I hope you did not expect me sooner. I have been terribly detained."

"I went over to the hospital side," said Tom; "there are some bad cases there."

"Kai wants you badly at the hospital; can you come at once?" said a small boy who had just knocked and entered.

"Say I am coming.—Here, Tom, help yourself," and Maurice gulped down a cup of tea the servant had just brought in ere he hurried off again.

"There is no rest for the wicked," quoted Tom, but Maurice was in too much haste to answer.

Soon after, Evelyn returned, and Tom threw down his book to listen to her account of her very happy day's outing.

"You are a nice host certainly," called out Tom when Maurice some hours later came in looking so ill as to cause Evelyn to add, "You must be half dead."

"I have a headache," he answered. "I have been so busy all day. Tao tells me you have had supper, so I ordered him to bring me something to eat in here."

"I ought to beg your pardon," said Evelyn, "but Tom was so hungry he vowed he would have to eat me soon."

" You would prove a tender morsel, Eva," laughed Maurice.

" Maurice," asked Tom suddenly, " how is my friend Chang ? "

" Gone home," answered Maurice shortly.

" He was in such pain."

" I know ; I was up with him a great part of the night."

" Maurice," cried Tom, seeing more even by his manner than his words that something was amiss, " you are not vexed with me ? I wish you had been in. I am very sorry if I did wrong in interfering. I only did it out of kindness."

" I know that, Tom," said Maurice, rousing himself and rising from his chair ; " but oh," and his voice had a sad wail in it—" oh, it was a cruel kindness ! "

" What was the matter with him ? " asked Evelyn, for Tom did not speak, and the silence grew oppressive.

" He is a confirmed opium-smoker. He came here to try to be cured."

" And I," cried Tom—" then that was an opium-pipe."

" Yes, it seems—how I wish I had been at home !" said Maurice breaking off short, for he did not like to say anything which might reflect on Tom.

" Why did he go home ? " asked Evelyn.

" He and Kai have had some words, I fancy. Any way he was quite determined to go, and of course I

could not keep him against his will ; and he was not in a fit state to be argued with, poor fellow."

" I am so sorry," burst out Tom again.

" So am I," said Maurice, " especially as I have always felt interested in Evelyn's lovers, as I always call Chang and his little wife in my own mind."

" What did you do all day, Eva ?" he added, hoping to change the conversation.

Whereupon Evelyn launched out into a description of her day's experiences, while Tom solemnly puffed away at his pipe, an energetic occupation in which Maurice soon afterwards joined him.

Evelyn's sweet voice ceased, and it was so quiet in the silent room that the clicking of her knitting-needles as she busily worked was distinctly heard. Her thoughts had sped far away to England and the English home to which she was so soon returning, and also back to the days of long ago, recalling old memories of happy times " when we were girls together." Maurice lay back in his chair half-asleep, and Tom, talkative Tom, was so deep in thought as for once to have forgotten that lively little member the tongue.

Meanwhile Chang was eating his heart out with remorse, blaming himself harshly and feeling overwhelmed with despair at the knowledge that there had been made for him a way of escape, and that he had even started on the road, when he had closed the door

against himself by indulging his deadly appetite for opium. He had begun to climb, and kind, eager hands had been held out to welcome him; and now he himself had loosened his own fingers and had fallen back, back into darkness—darkness without one star of hope. He was enshrouded in the chill mists of dull despair, though had he only raised his eyes to the scroll above his head he might have read thus, “Nothing is impossible in this world; only men’s minds are not firm enough to achieve it.” *

Haunted by bitter thoughts and utterly wretched, he felt he could not bear the solitude of his own room, and sought the society of his wife and mother, only to be reminded still more, as he beheld their sad faces and heard his mother’s heavy sigh, of what might have been.

Chang had told neither of them of his going to the opium hospital, knowing Nancho’s prejudice to foreigners. It would be very different when he came back cured, he told himself.

Of the other trio, Tom was, after all, the first to speak.

“Maurice,” he said in a very grave voice.

And Dr. Graham answered, yawning, “Yes?”

“Do all your patients suffer as Ting-Chang did?” continued Tom.

* Chinese proverb.

“ Long abstinence from the drug when once it has become a habit always causes suffering, generally great suffering, though it differs according to the patient, some people are so much more sensitive to pain than others. But this is wherein lies the most subtle danger of the opium—namely, that the only real relief to be obtained for the wretchedness and suffering which are the after-effects of an opium debauch is to be found in the opium-pipe.”

“ I believe he was dying,” said Tom firmly.

“ I think not,” replied Maurice, “ though I doubt not that he suffered acutely. He was very bad all night; but the symptoms were all the usual ones—the violent aching in the limbs, also dyspepsia, and that feeling of utter dejection, besides the terrible craving for the drug.”

“ What would you have done, Maurice, had you been here ? ”

“ I should most likely have given him some medicine, but I do not suppose it would have done him much good; he would have had to endure till he was cured. We doctors have to learn to be very hard-hearted,” added Maurice, smiling as he saw Tom’s horrified face.

“ Have you ever lost any opium patient ? ”

“ Yes, twice: the second one refused to take the opium even to save his life, saying he would rather

die. He had been addicted to the habit for ten years."

"Surely, Maurice, the remedy is worse than the disease," said Eva.

"Worse!" cried Maurice; "how little you know!"

"What is the effect of the habit? If, as you say, it is poison, it must be a very slow poison indeed."

"Dying by inches. The smoker is never the same man again; his blood is vitiated and his health is destroyed. Remember, I do not deny that there are many men who can smoke it with comparative impunity; but as the years pass on they find they too have to pay the penalty. But to my mind the thing which proves most vividly the evils of opium-smoking is, that I have never heard a Chinaman defend it, or one who does not say he would rather see his children dead at his feet than that they should touch an opium-pipe. You see for yourself how altered Hsi Ting-Chang is," he continued.

"Oh!" cried Tom, "it cannot be the result of opium-smoking. He must be ill in other ways."

Maurice shook his head.

"The experienced eye can tell an opium-smoker in a minute. The very look of the skin reveals the fact. As to the moral effects, I could say much, but," and he glanced at Evelyn, "there are things better left unsaid. There have been anti-opium societies

formed, that work well, but whose members do not love the English."

"Nor did my little Chinese friend, and certainly not the mother-in-law," said Evelyn. "It seems rather hard, when we English are so generous and helpful to all who are in distress. I wonder, Maurice," she continued, "that a law prohibiting the use of opium, like in Japan, has not been introduced into China. It works very well there."

"Evelyn, surely you know why. If you know the history of your own times, you must have heard about the opium war and opium trade. It is a disgrace to our nation. I must say it, Evelyn, although you do frown so."

"They say that the evils of opium-smoking are greatly exaggerated," she murmured.

"By us missionaries. I know. But, Evelyn, why should we want to exaggerate this thing? It is only that we are brought more in connection with the Chinese in our work than the other English in China, and therefore know them more intimately, and thus we hear these things. Also, with regard to some of our Government officials, I would quote the old saying, 'There is none so blind as those who won't see.'"

"Certainly if what I read in these papers to-day is half true," said Tom, pointing to some *Friends of China, Medical Opinions*, and other tracts referring

to the subject, all of which Maurice had had bound together into a neat book, "this opium-smoking is the curse of China."

"Sent by England."

Here Maurice was summoned from the room ; when he returned he was met with a question from Eva.

"But you do not really wish the Government of India to give up the monopoly of opium ! It would be worse still if it were made an ordinary trade speculation," she said.

"Certainly ; but I contend that Government should not use the monopoly as an article of revenue. China also ought to be given the option of shutting her ports if she will against all opium-vessels, which cannot be as the treaties stand at present. In fact, we should leave her perfectly free in the matter."

"I shall go to bed now," remarked Evelyn a few minutes later ; "it is getting late. Good-night, Molly," using his old pet name. "If England sends a curse to China, she sends also blessings in you and those like you."

For answer Maurice repeated Pu-tao's speech, whereat Evelyn was highly indignant. "When you have given up everything—home, country, honour, and riches ; for every one says you would have won them —to come and live in this wretched country."

"But, Eva," said Maurice, smiling at her warmth,

"he considers China the only country in the whole world. Judge the remark from his point of view, dear." But Evelyn, like most of her sex, found that an impossibility.

Long after she was in bed Maurice and Tom sat talking in low tones, and as the young sailor listened to terrible revelations as to the misery and vice to which this opium-smoking leads only too often, and heard his cousin's description, the vivid description of an eye-witness, of the awful degradation of the opium hells, as he appropriately called them, the colour left Tom's bronzed, sunburnt face.

Then looking into the noble, sensitive countenance of Maurice Graham, true index of a highly intellectual, almost over-refined nature—"How can you bear to see such sights, to face such horrors?" he cried impulsively.

"It is my duty," said Maurice calmly. "But I sometimes think," he added, "the most awful pain Christ, the pure, the sinless one, had to endure must have arisen from his contact with sin and sinners." And by these words so quietly spoken Tom Towers for one instant realized what must be the inner life of such a man as Maurice Graham when living in such a position as he occupied at Sin-tau.

"God help you, Maurice!" he whispered as he gave his hand a hearty shake ere saying good-night.

"To-morrow we will go for our postponed excursion.

I wonder if Evelyn will accompany us after all. Do you think it would be too tiring for her ? ” said Maurice.

“ Oh no ! But can you be spared ? ” nodding towards the hospital.

“ Yes. I did not tell Eva, but the poor man is dead. They called me to him, but I could do nothing but watch him die.”

“ What of ? ”

“ Dysentery.”

“ Did you try opium ? ” said Tom, knowing its efficacy in such cases.

“ No good. The man was a confirmed opium-smoker, so as medicine the drug had no effect.”

“ Oh,” cried Tom, the word opium reminding him, “ I feel quite wretched about Hsi Chang.”

“ Don’t take it to heart so, old man. Most likely, had he been cured, he would have gone back again to the pipe ; nine out of every ten do.”

“ Cheering maybe for me, but not for you or for the opium-smokers,” said Tom, as they parted for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

Lingsam's Cry.

“ Man’s love is of man’s life, a thing apart—
‘Tis woman’s whole existence.”

BYRON.

SIX months came and went, as months are in the habit of doing, bringing many changes in their train, even to the inhabitants of sleepy old Sin-tau city. Maachi had been “gathered to his fathers,” and Lao had inherited his carefully-gathered store of gold, the result of years of painful toil and care, and was spending it as fast as he could in gambling and other vices.

He had returned to his native city on the news of his uncle’s decease, and had found, like many others before him, that there were many who, while they would have nothing to do with him when wretched and impoverished, were yet willing enough to welcome the young heir, and assist him in acting the part of the fool who is soon parted from his money. Thus for the present his star was in the ascendant.

But before his uncle's death and his subsequent access of fortune, indeed only a month or two after the events related in a preceding chapter, his unlucky enterprise in Australia came to an abrupt conclusion, resulting in the ruin of Pu-tao, the loss of a large sum of money by Chang, and the total disappearance of Lao, only to reappear like a jack-in-the-box at his uncle's funeral.

Many and bitter were the reproaches that Pu-tao, his friend of former days, heaped upon Chang, cursing the stars he had ever sought his advice on that unlucky day. And Chang would shudder, having a guilty knowledge of a certain letter unread by Pu-tao; for he, knowing it was too late for action, and dreading the censure he so richly deserved, had never told of its arrival, trusting that, as seemed very probable at the time, Lao would never again be seen in Sin-tau, and that his secret would therefore be safe. Thus Chang was not one of those who welcomed Lao gladly on his return to his native city.

Nor was he very particularly delighted when, a few days after the uncle's funeral, Lao came to see him. Ere this first interview between them was over Chang had placed himself, by an unlucky slip of the tongue, entirely in Lao's power. At first, however, so soft was the glove worn, that he had hardly felt the iron hand beneath; but during the last few weeks Lao

had been tightening his grasp, seeing that his cousin showed signs of revolting.

This afternoon they had quarrelled over a game of chance, a quarrel that had ended in the complete humiliation of Chang, and as he now wends his way homeward, he is bitterly realizing the misery of being under the power of this bad, unscrupulous, cruel man; whilst Lao is gloating over the fact, plain enough that afternoon, that Chang fears him, and experiencing the same sensation of pleasure that a big spider must feel when he sees a little fly caught in the meshes of his cleverly-woven web.

What if Lao told? Chang dreaded such a *dénouement*, for he still tried to keep up appearances before his fellow-citizens, and was still holding the post he had fairly won. Nor did he realize how much men were talking about him already, and how the greater part of his neighbours had before now placed him in the category of confirmed opium-smokers, only too willing to pass upon him the easily-pronounced word of censure. But Chang knew not of all this. For Sin-tau had no *Truth*, no *World*, no *Vanity Fair*, nor yet any of their feeble penny imitators, to publish to the world the frailties and shortcomings of their neighbours, above all of those on whom the fierce glow of publicity falls, and to whisper to the delight of scandal-mongers, male and

female, their little secrets; or just to mention one or two "happy pairs" who have just sought the nuptial altar, the marriage having been usually effected by the parents of the couple, the bride oftentimes as obedient a sacrifice as any of her Chinese sisters. But pause an instant while a plea is offered for society papers. The evil that they do has been often commented upon with zealous truth, but now listen to a few words on their behalf. Many an evil deed has never been accomplished, many a wild longing has been restrained, many a reckless act stayed, by the thought, "It will get into one of those society papers." None would say that this is the best way: it is better far to root out the thistle and be rid of it altogether, all will agree; yet surely it is wiser to cut it down rather than that it should sting the careless foot of the passer-by. Men unwon by love are often restrained by fear —better surely this constraining fear than the lawlessness of sin—and thus, whether consciously or not, whether willingly or not, the society papers exercise oftentimes a power for good. But though paper preserved not, and it was not writ in black and white, still the tongues of the inhabitants of Sin-tau wagged as ardently as elsewhere, and men told each other all about Chang; the only difference being really that, the censure not taking a form to be seen by the eye of the culprit, he continued in blissful ignorance that

any one knew. As though people did not know as much about one as one does oneself, and a little bit more generally too.

Mais il faut que nous revenons à nos moutons, as a Frenchman would say—*les moutons* in this instance being Chang himself, as he wends his way past his old home, his no longer now, and lingers a minute at the door of the house where he had been so happy once with his pretty little wife and good mother, his bitter comparison of past and present not lessened by the sight of those old walls, every bit of which seem dear to him.

He at last continued his moody way until he reached the much smaller house at the other side of the town which he had bought when he had been obliged to give up the former handsome abode. For Chang, what with his losses, which, though not so great as Pu-tao's, had been severe, in connection with Lao's enterprise in Australia, and with other monetary losses, partly caused by the depredations of his employés whilst he smoked his opium-pipe careless of present care, was a comparatively poor man now.

Evelyn would never have recognized his haggard countenance and emaciated frame as with slow, inert step he walked wearily along. And this was all the work of that insidious “opium fiend.”

None of the little household felt the change of

circumstances more than poor Nancho, who with her mother-in-law was deprived now of many a little luxury to which they had been accustomed all their lives.

Bitter were the imprecations the older lady murmured against her grandchild—imprecations which grieved Chang much when he heard them, for his reverence for his grandmother was great. But his grief, though violent at times, was not strong enough to encourage him to conquer this dreadful vice by which he was held in bondage.

These low murmured curses were very bitter to the aching heart of poor Nancho, who, in spite of her anger and misery, still could love her child, and who also had, like all Eastern women, a horror of a grandmother's curse.

Poor little Lingsam was very unhappy too. She was now suffering often from a pain in her side; but she had one bright spot, one comfort, one great happiness—her beautiful boy. Baby was the only thing that had thriven during those sad months, and he had grown a very fine child from a Chinese point of view. He could now run alone, and was just at the age when children may best be described as human magpies, imitative and talkative. Whereas, however, at that what nurses call “most interesting age,” English babies are usually supposed to talk Chinese, Lingsam’s boy,

out of perversity, maybe, instead of talking Chinese, essayed Arabic or some dead tongue. Any way, Lingsam could not understand him; but I doubt if she would have been more successful had the "little folk" in England tried to hold a telephonic conversation with her. To-day, Lingsam was greatly excited, for baby had actually managed to say "mother" quite distinctly. Therefore, when Nancho left her alone late in the afternoon to visit her mother's room, Lingsam, burning to tell her news, had struggled to make her way to Chang's rooms (there were not now so many servants at her beck and call as there used to be), taking baby with her. Chang's old custom of going at once on his return to the house to the women's quarter, for a few words at least with his mother and Lingsam, had been dropped, for he could not bear the sad faces and reproving glances that met him there.

Fortunately for Lingsam, Chang, under the solace of his beloved pipe, which he had not long finished, had recovered from the melancholy and detestation-of-the-world mood in which he had entered the house, and was in a very good humour; otherwise she might have got a lecture for transgressing custom by entering his apartments.

But looking up and seeing the gentle, graceful little figure, so lovely still in his eyes, advancing

towards him, his heart bounded with pride and admiration. "Lao has not at least a treasure like this," he thought, as he rose to meet her, and laid her on an oblong divan, for the little walk had made her pause for breath. He stood caressing her gently until she was able to tell him her news, on hearing which he looked pleased enough even to satisfy the *exigeante* little mother.

As the boy, who, having escaped his mother's hand, had been making a hurried tour of the room, came up to his father and made a solemn tug at his skirt, he took the little fellow prisoner, telling him he was a very clever boy.

"Oh, hush! you must not say so; perhaps the gods will hear and want him," said Lingsam. "Besides, you will make him conceited."

But baby was not listening, being intent on trying to catch his father's pigtail, which hung tantalizingly beyond his tiny grasp.

Chang felt very happy for a few minutes with his wife and child beside him—forgetful of Lao, forgetful of money worries, forgetful for the nonce of himself. All his old love, never dead, only drugged by the opium fumes, revived in his heart as he smoothed his wife's forehead and listened to her sweet voice as she prattled about their baby.

And she forgot also—forgot her disappointments,

forgot her sorrow, forgot her fears, for those few happy moments.

Thus did Nancho, who, frightened at finding no Lingsam on her return, had gone in search of her, behold them as she peeped through the thin curtains, they all unconscious of her presence. Very bright, very happy did they look; Chang's sad altered face softened by the smile of deep affection on it as he gazed on his young wife, and she smiling back on him and the child.

Nancho turned away with a sweet, sad smile, the tears, often seen there now, in her deep-set eyes. There had been a time when Chang would never have been satisfied without her presence, and was never so happy as when she made one of the group. But now Chang feared her (sin is ever the precursor of fear), and was ill at ease in her society, and between these two, once so united, a great distance had arisen. It was not the love of another, fairer and younger than she was, as she had feared, that had separated them, but a more subtle influence still—a sinful indulgence in a most pernicious vice, which lowered her son in his own sight and in the sight of the world at large.

Nancho knew Chang feared her—it was one of the many sorrows which at this time oppressed her weary soul—but she had never so realized it as now, as she

turned away and entered the room she and Lingsam usually occupied. But even now the old unselfish love for her child reasserted itself. Might not Lingsam succeed where she had failed? Might not his girlish wife persuade him, at her entreaty, to give up that fatal course he was pursuing? Surely, oh surely, for Lingsam's sake, if not for hers, he would struggle, he would conquer, he would overcome! So she thought and hoped, and determined to speak to her docile little daughter-in-law, and get her to speak to her husband really seriously, and to plead with him to save himself from ruin and degradation.

Early next morning Lingsam and she were sitting together, baby on her knee, for she loved the little child devotedly. He was her one great comfort, her only hope for a satisfactory burial.

The old mother-in-law, who was complaining in a distressing tone over the loss of some small luxury Nancho could not now afford to buy her, was very deaf, and could not hear when Nancho took the opportunity to speak to Lingsam, imploring her to beseech Chang to give up his wretched opium-smoking.

"But, mother, if he would not do it for you, he will not for me," she said in reply to her mother's arguments.

"Ah! but he loves you so much better than he does me," said Nancho.

The few words were agony for her to say; but little Lingsam's heart trembled with pleasure, not because she was jealous of her mother-in-law, but because it is ever as sweet music to the ear to be told that the one you love loves you also, loves you dearly.

"I will do as you wish, mother," she said, and began to brave herself up for the interview, preparing little set speeches she would make to him. Had Lingsam had more knowledge of the world, she would certainly have saved herself the trouble; for who ever made the speech prepared for the proper occasion? Certainly not such an impetuous little woman as Lingsam. Her heart beat high, and then seemed to fade away, taking her breath with it, and on her pale cheek arose a crimson flush, but both the pallor and the flush were hidden beneath a thick layer of paint. The time passed slowly on. "Surely Chang is late—later than usual," thought poor excited little Lingsam. But he came in at last, and having eaten his dinner, which Lingsam superintended, he hurried at once to his own apartments.

If Nancho and Lingsam had been noticing him, they would have soon perceived that he was not in a particularly sweet humour, and no wonder. He had seen Lao again that very morning, and had foolishly remarked in praise of his little wife, pitying him for not being married. Lao had been most scornful, and

laughed at him for making such a fuss over that silly little woman of his. "I hear," he said, "that you spoil her; every one says so." (You will remember, Mr. or Mrs., Miss or Master Reader, whichever you may be, that Lao was very fond of exaggerating.) "If she was my wife," he had continued, "I should give her the stick sometimes, just to show her what you can do."—"Proud little woman," he thought, "I shall never forget the look she gave me on her marriage day." As for the baby, he was very glad he had no squalling brats. Then seeing that Chang was thoroughly vexed, he thought it an excellent opportunity for giving him a little gratuitous advice as to opium-smoking, recommending him, in an irritating off-hand manner, to give up the habit altogether, as he was making himself such a fool about it. He despised men who could not have an occasional pipe without going to extremes. All the time Lao was becoming daily more and more a slave to the baneful drug.

The feeling of superiority Chang always felt when with his cousin caused him to feel particularly mad at his disagreeable manner and remarks; and then, as he was leaving Lao's room, he heard announced Pu-tao, Pu-tao, whose very name always caused him to tremble. Would Lao tell on him, he wondered.

He felt ill, miserable, ruffled, unhappy, overstrung, and it was a matter of extreme importance that he

should have a taste of his beloved nerve-soothing though nerve-destroying drug without delay.

"I suppose I must have dinner first, or there will be such a fuss," he thought, on hearing it was ready ; "but I do not feel the least appetite for it."

Both Nancho and Lingsam, however, were too busy with their own thoughts and plans to notice Chang as much as usual, and Lingsam chose the sadly inopportune moment to enter his room just as he held the longed-for tube between his fingers ready to use.

"What do you want, little wife ?" he asked ; "you must not come in here at any time." Still he came forward and led her to the divan. He was always tender in his solicitude for her. "You must not stay now," he continued, "for I am busy. But rest a minute ; you seem so agitated. Baby is all right, I see," he added, looking at the child, who had followed his mother into the room.

"I wish to speak to you, Chang," she said with a little gasp, feeling that now she had come she must speak, whatever happened, though her heart beat so painfully she could hardly articulate.

"What is the matter ?" said Chang, glancing at his beloved pipe.

"I want you to give up that thing, for my sake and for the child's," she said, going straight to the point.

"What thing?" he asked, purposely misunderstanding her, and looking annoyed.

"That horrid opium," she sobbed. "Chang, do you love me?"

"Yes, dear, of course I do. I have told you so heaps of times," he said, patting her hand.

"Then, oh then, give it up, and we shall be happy again like we were last year, when we went on our trip together, and the Englishman said he was glad we were so happy. He looked as if he envied us, do you remember?"

"Yes," answered Chang gloomily. He much disliked to be reminded of Maurice, for his conscience told him he ought to go to him and try again to be cured of his fatal habit. "But why all these reminiscences, little woman? and why are you so excited?"

Lingsam was very indignant at his half-playful tone, for she, poor girl, was thoroughly in earnest, and felt as if she was fighting a battle for life or death.

"Oh, do give it up," she pleaded, as she lifted her sweet face to his, and seeing the love shining in his eyes, continued eagerly: "Oh, we were so very happy then; and if only you will give up this dreadful opium we shall all be happy again, and mother will be so glad." It was an unfortunate allusion to his mother, for he then guessed that she had sent Lingsam to

plead thus with him, and felt annoyed accordingly. Why might he not smoke his pipe in peace ?

" Be a good little woman and go away now, and I will think about it," he said coaxingly, and looking eagerly at his pipe.

Lingsam saw the look, and answered, " For you to smoke that wretched pipe ? No, indeed. Do you not understand ? I want you to give it up always. Oh, it has made you so wretched, so different from what you were before. Why, oh why did you ever touch it ? "

" I wish I had never done so," said Chang with all his heart.

" Those horrid Englishmen !" said Lingsam. " If they had only never pressed the trade on our country."

" Yes ; it is all the fault of the Englishmen," said Chang, glad enough to be able to lift the blame from his own shoulders. " They care for nothing but gold."

But Lingsam saw that the conversation had drifted away, and that she had not as yet obtained the desired promise. She asked, therefore, rather inconsequently :

" Do you love me, Chang ? "

" Of course I do," said Chang, but rather crossly, for at that moment he was heartily wishing for her room, not her company.

" Then you will give up that awful opium-smoking for my sake."

Chang was silent.

"Oh, you must; I wish it so much. Just to please me."

Chang glanced at the full pipe. "I can't," he said. "Do not be unreasonable and naughty."

"You don't love me, then?"

"Yes, I do; but I cannot give up my pipe," said he, by this time nearly as much agitated as she was. "You don't know what a hard thing you ask, child."

"But you will, my dear husband," she whispered.

"I cannot—it is impossible. Do not be troublesome, and remember your proper place."

"You will not, then?"

"I *cannot*, I tell you."

Lingsam's high spirit was on fire at these oft-repeated words. Rising to her feet, unmindful of physical pain in her excitement, she stood between her husband and the pipe he had put forth his hand to take.

"Cannot!" she cried, her voice sounding to her far, far away as she spoke. "Only cowards say 'cannot.' I despise you!"

Chang looked at her in horror. Was it Lingsam, his own little Lingsam, who was speaking thus? Yes, it was—the same sweet face which he used to love to see raised to his with that look of intense admiration that had been so pleasing to his pride as

well as to his love. It was the same sweet, clear voice—an uncommon voice for a Chinese woman—that had so often lisped out, “Whatever Chang does is right.” Once he had won her love, her admiration; and now she stood before him like an avenging deity. On that sweet face, which used to be full of ardent admiration, was a look of bitter, bitter scorn; and that sweet voice he had loved to hear ever since he had listened to that first shy word from her lips, uttered that bitter sentence, “I despise you!” Again it fell with yet greater intensity—“I despise you!”

And it was all his own fault, his own weakness; yes, he knew that, he told himself bitterly. But then another thought came: Was it not his wife, his own wife, who stood there and spoke thus? What right had she, had any wife, to speak so, to look thus at her husband? He would not endure it. A feeling of very passionate anger arose in his heart, and Lao's words of the morning came back to his mind.

In a moment, without giving himself time to think, Chang had raised his hand and struck her with all his force.

A sharp low cry rose from Lingsam as she staggered and fell forward on to the couch—an awful cry, not only a cry of physical suffering, but of the severer agony of mental distress.

Chang as he heard it regretted instantly his mad

action, and bent forward to see if she was hurt; but she shrank from him with such uncontrollable aversion that he drew back repelled and prepared to leave the room.

As he did so, however, he cast a glance back at the poor little trembling figure, quivering with suppressed emotion. Should he return and try to comfort her? He took two steps towards her, and then the remembrance of Lao's words crossed his mind. "No, she must learn her true place," he thought; "I must not continue to pet her so much. She will be all right presently." So thinking, he went out into the sunshine; while Lingsam lay still and motionless, like one stunned, save that ever and anon there broke from her quivering lips that same low moaning cry.

CHAPTER XIII.

Alone!

“ O we live, O we live,
And this life we would retrieve
Is a faithful thing apart
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.
Wilt thou be one with me?
I will be one with thee.
Ha ! ha ! we love and live ;
Alas ! we love and die.
Shriek—who shall reply ?
For is it not loved in vain ?”—E. B. BROWNING.

“ Nor Christians thirst for gold.”—POPE.

THE emotions and tribulation in the heart of little Lingsam are better imagined than described. Chang—her Chang—had struck her ! She loved him still devotedly, though during the last few months she had discovered (ah, the bitterness of that discovery !) that her idol was not flawless. And he ! he did not care for her ; she was nothing to him now—he had tired of her. So she told herself ; or else how could he have struck her that cruel blow ? She had been leaning on a broken reed, poor child ! and it

had pierced her hand. The refuge she had considered so safe had crumbled away, as human refuges ever do. She had put his profession of love to the test, and it had failed: what she had believed to be pure gold had proved to be but alloy. Lingsam knew but little of life, or perhaps she would have made excuses and not have blamed so harshly; but the young are ever extreme both in their praise and censure. Her idol was shattered, and she was left alone to weep its ruins.

The very intensity of her love made more poignant her grief. Better, far better surely, he had never taught her to love him so dearly, had never drawn her on and on, until now he had become as her own soul to her. “Oh, I wish I did not care!” she moaned in her agony; “I wish I did not love him so much!”

Then over her came the remembrance, the sweetest in her life, of the evening when he, the same Chang, had tried to save her from the cruel flames—that eventful evening, long ago, when they had first met and loved; and then she thought of her wedding-day, her agony of terror, her dread of the future, and the intensity of her joy on finding that the husband she had so feared was, after all, Chang himself—that her dearest wish was granted above her wildest dreams. She sighed bitterly. Did she fancy herself the first discoverer of that saddest acme of knowledge—even

the knowledge that granted desires do not always bring happiness in their train, and that the coveted possession is often granted but to prove one would have been better far without it?

She crouched lower and lower, her small long-nailed hands covering her sad face, desiring with natural longing to hide away from the glorious sunlight of day, for light suited ill with her present dark, melancholy mood. Then she recalled with aching heart her happy visit to Twa-tou, and every little incident stood out clear and vivid in her mind's eye.

What would Wang-fu say now? Would she not be very, very sorry for her? But the thought brought no comfort to that proud little spirit; nay, in her anguish she prayed the gods that Wang-fu might never know her sorrow, that she should believe her to be happy still—and her wish was granted.

Then upon her ears seemed to fall her gentle sister's voice as she had heard it last, saying, in that tired, still tone that had been so pitiful, "One gets accustomed to it," thus accepting patiently her sad lot.

"Would she ever get accustomed to it?" Lingsam asked herself wearily, "ever be acclimatized, as it were, to sorrow?" But her heart gave back quickly the old answer, "Never! never! never!"

Her forehead still throbbed with the pain of the cruel blow her husband had struck her, and the young

heart, too unversed in the ways of men to give due allowance for the passion of the moment, told itself in its anguish yet again that he cared for her no longer; nay, with that bitter revelation she was inclined to doubt if he had ever loved her at all, whether he could ever have felt towards her as she had towards him. For it was Chang, whom she still loved only too well, who had dealt that cruel blow, and it was the very depth of her love that caused her the bitter agony of mind she was enduring; for as in love lieth the highest, purest joy known to mortal man, so in love also lie hid the greatest depths of all sorrow, the saddest of all human woe.

In anguish too deep for words, almost too deep for thought, Lingsam lay, the quivering little body only an index to the mental strain she was suffering.

Thus came to the tired mind words, sweet, holy words—words she had said once laughingly were not meant for her, but which now seemed full of the sweet music of a loving invitation : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

So said the Saviour of mankind. Weary, heavy laden ? yes, she was that now—very weary, very much in need of the promised rest.

“ Come unto me.” Who was it who so spoke ?

She would like to know more about him, she thought; and then she remembered that Evelyn had given her a book about the God of the English, but she had never cared to read it, and mother had also said she had better not do so.

But mother's instructions seemed as nought in her sore need ; and Lingsam was just about to rise and fetch the book, when another thought came across her mind.

He was the God of the English, and was it not to these English she owed all her misery ? for if Chang had never entered that awful opium-saloon all would have been well.

"Mother says that before that dreadful war there were no saloons ; that it is the English who send that awful drug to our country. Curse the white devils !" she muttered between her clenched teeth. Remember she did not know it was wrong to curse. "I do not want to have anything to do with their God."

The sweet remembrance of Evelyn had faded from her mind during those sad days of trouble. Indeed now, in her utter misery, she was inclined to wish she had never seen either Evelyn or Tom, but had perished in those fierce flames. Also, did they not belong to that nation, that hateful nation, but for whom she might still have been happy ; for then Chang would never have become an opium-smoker ?

And thus little Lingsam, judging only by what she knew, remained alone in her overwhelming trouble, brought on her not by her own wrong-doing, but by the wrong-doing of others; nor knew of Him who could so truly have sympathized with her—Christ, the God-man who in the garden of Gethsemane was bowed down beneath that load of sorrow, even the sins of the whole world, until He was crushed to the earth, and His sweat, it is written, “was as great drops of blood.”

Thus Lingsam still lay on, telling herself in her pain that there was nothing left in life for which to hope. Poor, heart-broken child-wife! so weary, so young—only at an age when happy English “lassies” are busy at work at their studies or at their innocent games, without thought of the future or sorrow for the past.

She was hardly conscious of her surroundings, so great was her misery, until a strange gurgling sound aroused her, and turning round, she beheld a sight which, thank God! no English mother can behold.

It was not really long since Chang had left the room. One can suffer the misery of a lifetime in the space of a moment. In her utter despair and sorrow, Lingsam did not realize the fact that Chang had gone and left her *alone*, still less that her baby-boy was still in the room. Indeed, so great had been her agi-

tation on entering that she had not noticed that the child had followed her.

“Little Vagabond,” as baby had been nicknamed (the non-euphonious title having been bestowed on him to try to deceive the spirits as to the value and importance of this tiny heir), had run with a crow of delight after his father’s disappearing pig-tail. But finding pig-tail and father both gone when he reached the spot, he had submitted quietly—for Chinese babies are submissive little mites—to the fact without giving vent to a roar of disappointment; and he then decided to make a tour of the room, and had performed this feat with due solemnity, and then had come and stood beside his mother—his poor, broken-hearted little mother.

Surely the mightiness of her sorrow must have been awful in its intensity, for the little child turned away without a sound and without touching her.

In so doing something attracted baby’s attention, even the pipe his father had just filled when Lingsam had entered the room.

Little Vagabond had seen Chang often, far too often, with that pipe in his hand. “I’ll be papa,” he thought, putting it between his baby lips. But he soon grew tired of this amusement; and he turned the pipe upside down, and began to extract the opium from it. No sooner had the little fingers accomplished

that clever feat, than the opium found its way, like most things that came within little Vagabond's reach, into the baby mouth.

The first thing that roused his mother was the heavy thud of the little body as the child fell insensible on the floor.

“Baby! little Vagabond!” Thus exclaiming, his mother sprang up and caught the child in her arms, and was hastening to call for assistance, when a sudden, strange, sad thought arrested her footsteps. “Is it not best,” she thought wildly, “that he should die now than live to grow up to become like his father?” and even then she recalled with utter agony those happy days when her one desire had been that her boy should grow up to be just like Chang.

If her baby lived, might he not smoke opium, and cause her, his mother, grief as poignant as that of Nancho’s? Better, far better he should die.

So dictated Lingsam’s distorted brain as she looked at the boy in her arms—her own, only child—and watched, apparently unmoved, the fair, blithe life slipping quietly away.

One or two convulsive struggles, a few seconds of laboured breathing, and the little one had passed away from earth; only a lifeless corpse was left in the mother’s arms.

"Baby, my baby boy!" said Lingsam; but no smile answered responsively her call, no tiny hand was stretched forth in eager welcome, for the child was dead—dead!

A violent revulsion of feeling swept over her as she realized this. Baby, her baby, was dead; what should she do? Never would he again climb on her knee or put his baby arms about her neck; oh the pity of it! Never again would he try to call her by that dear name of mother. Could it be yesterday, only yesterday, that she and Chang had been so proud of his baby achievements? and now, never more would those little prattling lips unclose. What could she do without her baby?

And the thought of Chang brought another horror. What would he say? what would he do when he found out that his beloved baby boy was dead? Would he not be very angry with her—very, very angry? Perhaps he might strike her again. And the sensitive, overstrung nature recoiled with agony at the very idea. She could not, she would not bear it. Nancho too—how she would blame her, and tell her how careless she had been! Yes, and it was true; it was her own fault baby had died. And now, do what she might, she could not bring him back again; he was gone from her for ever.

Then came another thought. Why should she not

follow him? She turned to look again at the pipe. Beside it on the table lay a small packet of opium opened only that morning.

While there is life there is hope. Little Lingsam, if not for your own sake, for the sake of those dear to you, pause! consider ere you by your own act take the final step across "that bourn from whence no traveller returns."

Lingsam did pause, did consider. Life beat strongly in her veins, and she was young, so very young to die.

But across her mind floated her sister's words, "One gets accustomed to it." No, she never would, never could. She never could face Chang's anger again, never again could she endure the anguish of having his hand uplifted against her. Her high spirit rose in arms at the very thought, and so she determined to plunge into the "great unknown."

"My baby," she whispered, clasping her dead child in her arms closer still, "I will follow you. Maybe we shall meet again, my beautiful one; any way, my husband will not be able to hurt or pain me more;" and then she deliberately took out a little of the poisonous powder and swallowed it as she lay on the divan, where she had thrown herself again in her new grief. The narcotic soon began to work on her enfeebled frame, and Lingsam sank softly into its pernicious slumber.

"How blissful!" she sighed as she felt her tired limbs smoothed into an intense rest. And for the first time her heart softened towards Chang.

"Poor husband! no wonder he felt it was so hard to give up this fascinating awful opium. I was not patient enough with him," she thought; "but then I did not know."

Ah, is it not the cry with many and many a one, not only with this little Chinese lady, If we had known, if we had only known! Many a hard sentence is given, many a harsh judgment passed, only through lack of knowledge. Who is so tender a judge as he who has been under the same temptation himself? Who is so patient as he who knows the struggles and difficulties of the path? And it is He who knoweth all things, and from whom nothing is hid, who is the God of patience, and who bids his children "let patience have her perfect work," that they may be "wanting nothing."

Lingsam dreamt beautiful airy dreams. Once again Chang and she were happy, so happy; and baby was no longer dead, but playing at her knee. Then she saw Wang-fu standing before her, no longer miserable, but with a baby boy in her arms and a smile on her lips. Then Nancho and she were resting on a bank of flowers, and she was telling Nancho that Chang was quite well. And then she knew nothing

more till she very gradually awoke to earthly consciousness, for she had not taken enough opium to kill her. But though her mind had returned to full consciousness, her body felt still as if paralyzed.

She tried to recall the events of the past hour, and fast and horrible came back the returning tide of memory. What had she done? Taken her own life! Was she dying?

She would seek assistance, she thought, longing to have some one near her. But when she tried to move she found she could not do so; all power was gone. Her limbs seemed bound by some icy spell. Away in the distance she could hear the traffic of the city, the call of the watermen, and the shouts of the sedan chairmen, and she thought she could distinguish a long slow trampling as of some funeral procession passing by. Hers would be passing through the gates of the city soon, just like that one was. If only she could rise and call.

“Chang! mother!” she strove to articulate, but the words were not able to escape from those trembling lips; and if they had it would have been of no use, for Chang was smoking opium and dreaming unreal dreams of delight at the opium-saloon, while his devoted wife was dying at home with none beside her save her dead child, still clasped in her loving arms. Meanwhile Nancho, poor Nancho, had not

heard Chang go out of the house, and was waiting, with a patience taught her by years of suffering and trouble, the result of the interview when it should be over, and hoping against hope for its successful termination.

Then came the dreadful question to little Lingsam, “Where, oh where am I going ?” She could not tell, she knew so little, and her heart failed her as she thought of entering upon another world. She stood by the banks of the dark river, and she was alone !

“ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me.” This text brought no comfort to Lingsam’s mind ; for though He was there she knew Him not—had never heard of that gracious promise. And had she known, had she heard, she would most likely not have listened to His message ; for was He not the God of the English, who only care for gold, gold, gold, not for the bodies and souls of men ?

The loneliness seemed awful to her ; she longed intensely for a hand, a voice, and especially did she long for Chang.

“ If only he was here,” she thought, “ he might kiss me once again. My husband, will you be sorry ?”

She recalled how, in one of the temples, she had seen pictures of the agonies endured in a future state

by those who had sinned in this world ; and she shuddered, for she feared the Buddhist "hell," and had heard no whisper, knew no hope, of the Christian's heaven.

Then she remembered that having committed suicide because of her husband's cruelty, she would therefore haunt him evermore. And this brought only fresh misery to her full heart. She did not want to haunt Chang, to make him miserable ; she loved him too much for that.

"He will be afraid of me, he will be made miserable by me. I will not, I must not die," she thought.

But Lingsam was fighting with an invincible warrior. She had to yield.

"Oh the awful pain in my side !" she moaned, as her breath came in short, sharp gasps. "It is getting so dark ; can it be night yet ? Oh, why does not Chang come ?"

But it was not the darkness of night. The hot sun fell with piercing rays upon the house, and made its way even into the jealously-guarded room ; but Lingsam saw not the sunbeams, though one fell on her dead child's face, for her eyes were blinded by the shadow of the great "ingatherer." The lamp of her life was but flickering ere it expired. She was dying, and alone.

"Chang," she strove to cry, seeking still that earthly love which had been her one comfort during

that short life which was now “going out” in such unutterable gloom and sadness. “Chang ! ”

And this time her great desire conquered, and from those dying lips the word fell clearly—the name of her beloved uttered in those sweet, soft tones. But none heard, none answered, and with one long, quivering, heart-broken sigh little Lingsam passed away from mortal ken, and the floods of the cold river closed over her weary head. And still she was alone ; her earthly love had failed her, as earthly love is so prone to do, in the hour of her extremity.

In that little room was a great stillness, as the mother and child lay hushed together in the deep silence of death.

“For He knoweth our frame ; He remembereth that we are but dust.”

So read Maurice in the little English prayer-book he held in his hand. His head rested on his hand in a very weary manner ; and Maurice was indeed very tired, for he had returned only the day before from a town sixty miles away further inland, and with no “foreign ghost” within the same distance. He had been taking the work of another medical missionary who had been “home” on a holiday after years of labour there, only to be told by his friends and acquaintances, “ You missionaries are for ever coming

home," they meanwhile apparently forgetful of the fact that unless they have their month's holiday every year they consider themselves very hardly used.

Maurice was very glad to return to Sin-tau, for he had lived there so long that the dirty Chinese city had quite a home-like air to him, and he rejoiced to be again in his own quarters as he sat resting in the study after the Chinese service.

"An urgent message for you, sir," said the boy, "from Hsi Chang; please to come at once."

"Certainly." And ere many seconds had elapsed, Maurice, unmindful of fatigue, was making his way rapidly, escorted by the servant who had brought the message, through the hot, crowded streets of the city, on which no Sabbath calm rested, past the strong-smelling opium-saloons, the steaming cook-stalls with their strange messes, past the street-actors' platforms, until they reached the farther end of the town and mounted the hill on which Chang's house was situated, not far from that in which Lingsam had dreamt her day-dream of love.

"I wonder what Mr. Hsi wants with me," he thought. "He was not inclined to be particularly friendly when last we met."

Chang had returned that afternoon to his house after a pipe in the opium-saloon, feeling a bit shy, and wondering how Lingsam would greet him. "I

declare," he thought, "if she will not make it up first I will. After all, she was right and I was wrong. I have half a mind to go to Mr. Graham again and try to overcome this terrible weakness of mine, if only to please her. I love her so much, even though she is my wife; she is so fascinating, so noble, I cannot have her despise me. How I wish I had never acquired this wretched habit. It will be terribly hard to give it up," remembering his former experience.

He looked into the little sitting-room of the women's apartments, where Lingsam usually sat, but it was empty. He then went into the garden, and not finding her there walked casually into his own room.

There lay Lingsam upon the couch with her baby beside her. Chang smiled to see them thus. "Baby is a fine child," he thought. "My beautiful boy." (Spirits are not supposed to understand thoughts, so in them he could give full vent to his fatherly satisfaction.) "I expect he is asleep, or Lingsam would never lie so quiet; or she is still vexed and will not speak to me."

"Lingsam, little one." But she heard not, knew not that he was calling. He was too late. The voice she had so longed to hear was speaking, but those dearly-loved accents fell on but dead ears.

A horrible fear seized on Chang; he passed his fingers with intense tenderness over the tiny hand of

his young wife, but she felt not the gentle pressure. Almost wild with grief, he flung himself down beside her, entreating her to speak to him, to come back to him, and he would give up anything for her sake.

Hoping against hope, refusing to believe his own fears, he had sent off in hot haste for Maurice Graham, knowing that often he was able, if the sufferer was not already dead, to give restoratives, and thus revive the dying. And though Maurice had been so quick, the minutes had seemed hours as he waited in agonizing suspense for his coming.

As Maurice entered the room, ushered in by the servant in a terrible hurry, a most pitiable spectacle met his view.

There lay the fair young mother, so still, so motionless, with her child beside her—both dead, as his practised eye told him at the first glance. In an agony of grief, Chang, with low cries and moans, was caressing one of his wife's lifeless hands; while at the other side of the divan stood a fine, noble, sad-looking woman, her face as marble-like in its whiteness as those of the dead, her fingers placed on the forehead of her only little grandchild.

Chang sprang up on Maurice's entrance, entreating him excitedly to restore Lingsam to him. "It cannot surely be—it must not be—she cannot be dead. Oh bring her back to me!" he cried.

To satisfy him, though only too well assured himself of the fact that no amount of restoratives could ever bring back to earth bright little Lingsam, he began to examine the lifeless corpse.

"Death from heart disease, accelerated by opium," he said in a few minutes in a clear voice. "She is quite dead, and the child too," he added, holding the baby's pulse. "Has she had any particular excitement to-day?" he asked.

There was silence.

"See here," continued Maurice, placing his hand on the dead Lingsam's cheek; "she must have met with an accident." And he turned and looked at Chang and read the truth in his face.

"Poor child!" murmured Maurice. Was this, he thought sadly, the end of Eva's little romance? Had love but brought death in its train, and what should have been a blessing proved a curse?

"She loved you so much," he added after a brief pause.

"It is all that awful opium-smoking," moaned Chang.—"My love, come back, come back!"

"It is not too late to try to overcome the craving," said Maurice in a low, earnest voice, remembering sadly his last opportunity. "Come and try again," he pleaded. "I will do all I can to help you."

As he spoke, his hand touched unwittingly the

baby's ice-cold forehead, and so doing his fingers came in contact with Nancho's hand, almost as cold as the dead child's.

Maurice looked into her face, his heart full of sympathy for the anguish expressed in that sad countenance.

"Will you not come, Chang?" he pleaded.

"Are you an Englishman?" said Nancho, speaking abruptly.

Surely a strange question to ask in this chamber of death. Maurice, startled, replied without reflection, "Yes."

"Then I hope you are satisfied at the mischief your nation has accomplished; and mind you, this is but one of the many homes in China ruined by opium-smoking."

Maurice knew it only too well.

"But for you English and your hateful traffic in this wretched opium we might have been so happy," she continued bitterly. "I should be ashamed, were I you, to belong to such a nation; ashamed to own it my country," she went on. "No wonder you blush!"

The mantling colour had mounted to Maurice Graham's pale face as he stood silent before her. He had nothing to say, for he knew her remarks were just; and yet it was his country, his beloved country, against which she thus spoke.

"Go!" she cried with rising anger. "I hate you English. Go, and leave us in our misery!"

Maurice turned to look at Chang; but he carefully averted his face, fingering the very pipe which, though he knew it not, had caused his little son's death.

Then with a parting glance at the young Chinese mother and her child, sleeping thus together the long, long sleep of death, he turned with trembling lip away, crossed impetuously the long room with hasty strides, and soon stood without the portico.

The sun was setting like a ball of fire, and the long hot day was drawing to a close, and the tocsin bell had already rung its warning.

"How can I help it?" murmured Maurice. "Oh, my country, my country!"

And in answer, as he hurried along the narrow, filthy streets, feeling so weary, so depressed, there rang in his ears, as if in bitter mockery, the words of Gilbert's comic opera:—

"He might have been a Prussian, a Greek, or Turk, or Russian,
Or else Italian;
But in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations,
He still remains an Englishman."

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